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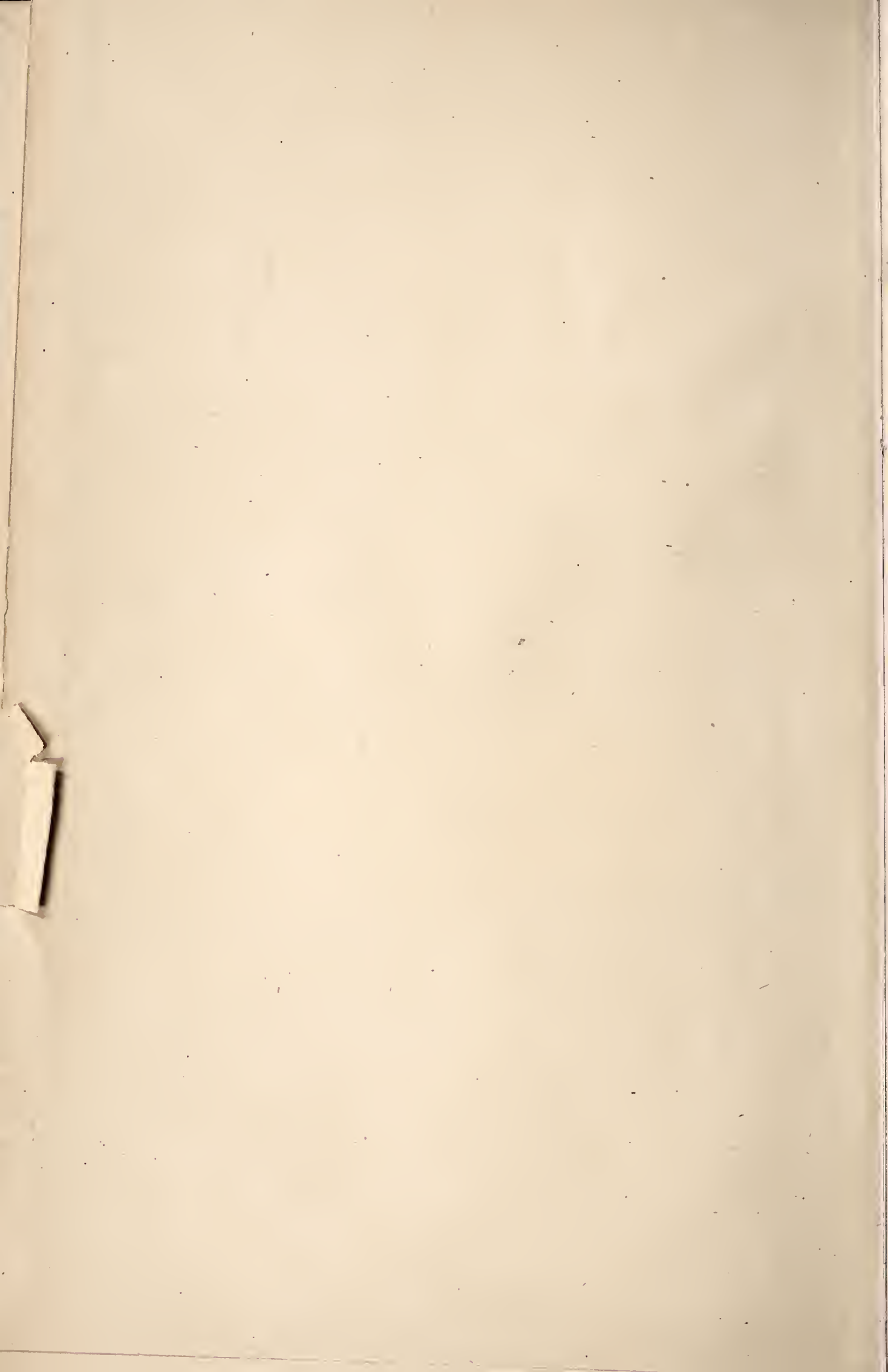
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Central evidences of
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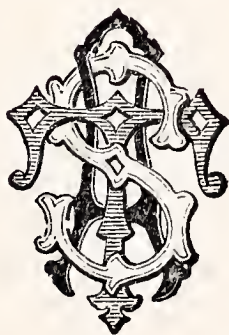




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CENTRAL EVIDENCES

OF

CHRISTIANITY.



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CHRIST

THE

CENTRAL EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

BY

REV. PRINCIPAL CAIRNS, D. D.,

AUTHOR OF

"CHRISTIANITY AND MIRACLES."

THE ARGUMENT IN BRIEF.



I. THE Christ of the Gospels is a real person, because of the wonderfulness, originality, and unity of the conception of his character, which are admitted by the most eminent unbelievers; because of the harmony of the portraiture found amid all the diversities in the four Gospels; because of the failure of recent attempts to invalidate the historical truth of the Gospels, or produce a new reading of them which commands general acceptance.

II. The Christ of the Gospels is shown to be the centre and strength of every argument for the truth of Christianity. The miracles of the Old Testament all lead up to him. The success of Christianity is due to him. Prophecy derives all its coherence and significance from him. The adaptation of Christianity is due to him. The argument from the reflection of God's holiness and love centres in him.

CHRIST

THE

Central Evidence of Christianity.



IT is becoming more and more apparent to friend and foe, in the great struggle between Christian faith and doubt, that the key of the position is the person of Christ himself; and that so long as the obvious meaning of the Gospel narrative as to the life, character, and work of that grand central figure can be accepted as "fact, and not delusion," no weapon lifted against Christianity can prevail. It is a presumptive argument of truth in any system to have a centre; and in this tract I propose to show, confining attention chiefly to the four Gospels, that the life of Christ as there exhibited is a reality, and is so fitted to bind all the Christian evidences together as to furnish an additional and independent evidence of the divinity of the Christian faith.

Our question is twofold: IS THE CHRIST OF THE GOSPELS A REAL PERSON?

IF SO, HOW DOES THIS CONCENTRATE, AND THUS STRENGTHEN ALL THE EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY?

I.

It is not necessary to go into any other part of the New Testament to find a sufficient answer to the question, what the Gospels really mean by their narratives of Christ's life and death and resurrection. No doubt most important and precious expositions are, as Christians believe, divinely added. But to the vast majority of Christians, it has ever seemed that the Gospels, not excluding the foregoing light of the Old Testament, are the very fountain-heads of all Christian doctrine, and they are so because they contain the portrait of Christ himself, and his own utterances as to his personal rank and character, and the aim and issue of his earthly mission. The sum of the teaching of Christ's recorded life and history may be given thus: that we have in him, as man, a perfect and sinless example; that he is truly God as well as man; and that as a Saviour, by his sacrifice on the cross, and other provisions of his redemption, he rescues men from the guilt and power of sin, and restores them to God.

Deeper statements of Christian theology are not here needed. These are concurred in by the

immense majority of Christians as drawn from and founded on the records of Christ's own life. Nor by them only, for there are others of no small name, unhappily not themselves Christians, who grant that Christians have not here misinterpreted their own records, and that, whether true or false, these are the conceptions of Christ's person, character, life, and influence which the writers of these documents intended them to embody.

It will be granted, to begin with, that these conceptions of a human life, actually realizing perfection, nay, embracing an incarnation of God, and thus affording a complete and divinely sanctioned remedy for moral and spiritual evil, are the most remarkable, simply as conceptions, in all literature. The mere statement of them is enough to relieve us from the charge of vagueness and generality when we speak of the life, character, and work of Christ; we can therefore proceed to the argument of this tract, and show first that these are not mere conceptions, however great, but facts of a true and solid history; and then that all Christian evidence becomes, by this proof, strong with a new strength, and bright with a new light.

The proof of my first point is more copious than can be fully stated; but the arguments for

the historical reality of the life and character of Christ, as indicated, are such as follow:

1. The historical truth of the Christ of the Gospels is vouched for by *its transcendent wonderfulness and originality*. It is not the Christian church only that speaks thus; for even those on its outer verge or beyond its limits give back Christian language here with a strange echo. Rousseau's picture of Christ—almost incredible from a man of such life, though he always claimed to be a Christian—is wound up in these words, "The gospel has marks of truth so great, so striking, so perfectly inimitable, that the inventor of it would be more astonishing than the hero."* Nor can we say that Rousseau limits himself to the human side of Jesus, for he says, "If the life and death of Socrates are those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a God."†

It is a lower testimony that Mr. Stuart Mill delivers; yet though he takes exception to the proper deity of Jesus, as not claimed even by himself, he grants the originality of his character to be a proof of its historical truth. "Who among the disciples of Jesus or among their proselytes was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus, or of imagining the life and

* Emile, Book IV.

† Ibid., Book IV.

character revealed in the Gospels? Certainly not the fishermen of Galilee, as certainly not St. Paul.”* The question then comes back on Mr. Mill, who it was that suggested to the evangelists the more divine features of Jesus, or those which have led the Christian world to take him for divine. According to Mr. Mill himself, “it is the God incarnate, more than the God of the Jews or of nature, who, being idealized, has taken so great and salutary a hold on the modern mind.”† But if the evangelists could not have invented, as he grants, the human Christ, how much less could they have idealized him into God? A history which has led the vast majority of readers in all ages to feel that it was more than human, is confessedly beyond human construction. Christian theology itself is baffled when it tries to state in propositions the two natures of Christ, and the relation between them. The decrees of councils and the terms of creeds rather exclude error than grasp truth. Yet here admittedly, in the narratives of the evangelists, the impossible is achieved. The living Christ walks forth, and men bow before him. Heaven and earth unite all through: power with gentleness, solitary greatness with familiar intimacy, ineffable purity with forgiving pity, unshaken will with unfathomable

* Essays on Theism, p. 252.

† Ibid., p. 252.

sorrow. There is no effort in these writers, but the character rises till it is complete. It is thus not only truer than fiction or abstraction, but truer than all other history, carrying through utterly unimaginable scenes the stamp of simplicity and sincerity, creating what was to live for ever, but only as it had lived already, and reflecting a glory that had come so near, and been beheld so intently, that the record of it was not only full of "grace," but of "truth."

The unity of the character of Jesus is one of the most singular features in each Gospel narrative. We apprehend this better when some great and admired writer in going over the same sacred ground falls, so to speak, out of the piece. An instance of this has struck me much in so consummate a master of description as Goethe; and it has struck me all the more that the injury is only done to the Saviour as his character is reflected in his disciples. In the admired Easter scene in the "Faust," the chorus of angels bring the message of resurrection, and the women take up the language of disappointment, saying that they find Christ no longer here. This may be the result of lingering doubt; but when the message is sounded again by the angels, and taken up by the chorus of disciples, who now accept the fact, their first utterance is one of grief that their

Master is raised to heaven, and they are left to suffer below, so that the angels need again to comfort them by the assurance of his continued and invariable presence. Now nothing is less like the Gospel scenes. The disciples suffer there only from the stroke of Christ's death, and the fear that his rising was too good news to be true. Their sense of joy and of triumph, of joy in, and of triumph with, him, were he but risen indeed, was so great, that no room could possibly have been left, with Christ anywhere, for such lamentation as Goethe introduces; and thus these artless, unlettered men have drawn a truer Christ than this great genius, with their example before him, and with all Christian literature beside, was able to do.

2. A *second* argument for the historical reality of Christ's life and character is found in *the consent of so many separate testimonies*. I am not now urging the credibility of the evangelists on the ordinary historical grounds of their nearness to the facts and their integrity as witnesses. These considerations cannot, in their own place, be overestimated; and the whole strain of recent criticism is in the direction of confirming disputed points of date and authorship. I proceed now, however, rather upon the simple fact that so many separate writers, with visible independence,

should have drawn essentially the same unparalleled character. One Gospel is a marvel; what shall we say of four, each with its distinct plan—its enlargements and omissions, its variations even where most coincident, its problems as yet unsolved, but always yielding something to fresh inquiry, and only making more manifest the unchallengeable oneness and divinity of the history? The difficulties of the Gospels from divergence are as nothing compared with the impression made by them all of one transcendent creation; and for my part, if I rejected inspiration, I should have reason to be still more astonished. Some slight mistake could so sadly have impaired perfection—or yet more easily lowered divinity; some careless handling might have deranged the balance at the most critical point, or pulled down the structure in hopeless disaster. Yet, though we see how different the plan of each Gospel is, there is not any such trace of failure. The long discourses are left out by Mark, but in action his Christ equals that of Matthew. Luke has his own type both of parable and miracle; but the same inimitable figure starts up from all. The sorest trial to the familiar features comes from the fourth Gospel, without a parable and hardly a miracle like the foregoing, and with so great a flood of novelty, especially towards the end. But the unity in di-

versity is only the more marvellous. The Christ of the fourth Gospel is the Word of God; but he is still the Son of man. He utters no Sermon on the Mount; but he still preaches the kingdom of heaven. The sheep scattered abroad find in him still the Good Shepherd. There is no exorcism; but the prince of this world is cast out. There is no transfiguration, but his glory is throughout beheld; no agony in the garden, but his soul is troubled. Mary and Martha reappear, but attended by Lazarus. He does not say, "This is my body," but he gives his flesh to eat; and words as heavenly, and in fuller measure, soothe the parting meal. He has the same night watches. He sheds the same tears. He walks the same waters, and ascends up where he was before. His prayer in all the Gospels is intercession—in the last most prolonged and tender. He returns from the grave to breathe the Holy Ghost, and to connect that name with the Father's and his own. His presence is the final hope of the earlier Gospels; his coming of the last; and the closing charge but repeats all former calls, "Follow thou Me." In the view of this vast and stupendous harmony, how small are all objections, as that the scenes in the fourth Gospel lie more in Jerusalem, though this also is met by the word in the other Gospels, "How *often* would I have gathered you,"

Matt. 23:37; or that the chronology differs, though the last Gospel really aids us in solving chronological difficulties; or that the style tends more to self-assertion in the face of unbelief, though this is part of the self-revelation that enters into the idea of this Gospel, and is abundantly prefigured in the great denunciation of the Pharisees, and in the sad but lofty utterances of Capernaum, "No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him," Matt. 11:27, the exact parallel of the intercessory prayer, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee; but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me." John 17:25. With all these data, then, and many others, of the Gospel records, which are not conjectures but facts, the only rational conclusion is, that they embody reality, the greatest reality ever transacted on the scene of time; that the very diversities so often appealed to as an objection to this conclusion really strengthen it, and prove that writings which can so bring forth the one out of the manifold have in them not only truth but inspiration; and that the Christian church stands in the centre of all history, divinely planted there, when she still proclaims as from the beginning that Jesus is the Christ—the Son of God.

3. A *third* argument, and the last here adduced

by us, in favor of the strict and literal truth of the Gospel views of Christ *is the failure of recent attempts to set them aside*. If the Christ of the evangelists were unhistorical, surely by this time some better reading of the story ought to have been established to the satisfaction of all. But as it is, the simple primitive records keep the field; and every new scheme is only brought to birth to find a speedy extinction. Let me illustrate this by two instances—the modern theories of Christ's moral excellence, and the alleged origin of super-human views of his character and work.

Take *first* the modern *theories of Christ's moral excellence*. They have at first a look of great liberality towards Christ and Christianity, and of almost unexpected concession and homage. Thus says Renan, "This Sublime Person, who daily presides still over the destiny of the world, we may call divine, not in the sense that Jesus absorbed all the divine, or, to use a scholastic word, was adequate to it, but in the sense that Jesus is the individual who has made his species take the greatest step towards the divine." "Jesus is the highest of the pillars that show to man whence he comes and whither he ought to tend. In him is condensed all that is good and exalted in our nature."* But then mark how all, in harmony

* "Vie de Jesus," pp. 457, 458 (11th French edition).

with rationalism, is qualified. "He was not impeccable; he has conquered the same passions that we combat; no angel of God comforted him, save his own good conscience; no Satan tempted him, but only that which each carries in his breast."*

Exactly so it is with Strauss. He speaks in his second "Leben Jesu," 1864, as if Christ's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount brought to the world a genial revolution, "like a fertilizing rain in spring."† He grants "that in every respect Jesus stands in the first line of those who have developed the ideal of humanity," and "by embodying it in his own person has given it the most living warmth, while the society that proceeded from him has secured for this ideal the widest reception among mankind."‡ But he also, like Renan, soon makes exceptions, and speaks of sides of excellence that in Jesus "were only faintly indicated, or not even hinted at."§

We see something, though less, of the same conflict in Mr. John S. Mill. "When this pre-eminent genius is combined with the qualities of probably the greatest moral reformer and martyr to that mission who ever existed upon the earth, religion cannot be said to have made a bad choice in pitching upon this man as the ideal represent-

* "Vie de Jesus," p. 458 (11th French edition).

† "Leben Jesu," p. 204.

‡ Ibid., p. 625.

§ Ibid., p. 626.

ative and guide of humanity; nor even now would it be easy even for an unbeliever to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract to the concrete than to endeavor so to live that Christ would approve our life."* Mr. Mill is indeed restrained from uttering the same qualifications as Renan and Strauss; but they lie in the context of his system, which excludes an absolutely perfect man as a miracle, just as Mr. Mill takes exception expressly to Jesus as divine.

Now, without raising the question of divinity, is it not plain that such a moral hero, great but still defective, as these writers have endeavored to substitute for the Christ of the Gospels, is utterly incredible, if the Gospels are to have even so much historical worth as they themselves allow? What flaw have the evangelists exposed in Christ, so as to have it generally admitted as in the case of the other great men of the Bible? While the biographers of Christ, with their severe simplicity, do not panegyryze him, it is written on the face of their narrative that they hold him faultless. And what is far more, Christ holds himself so, and refuses to accept the eulogies, even the most gently qualified, that are now heaped upon him. Any noble type of goodness that is still imperfect, is always painfully, exqui-

* "Essays on Theism," p. 255.

sitely alive to the imperfection, confesses it before man, lays it open before God, and repels with utter abhorrence words that savor of unlimited perfection. Had the character of Jesus been what these writers assert, could he have concealed it from himself, or disguised it from his disciples? Must he not have uttered some note of warning, like the greatest of his followers, "Stand up, I myself also am a man;" "We also are men of like passion with yourselves"? Whereas Christ challenges the Pharisees, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" John 8:46.

Even in the most solemn act of prayer, and in the review of a completed life, he addresses the Father, "I have glorified Thee on the earth. I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." John 17:4. These, it may be said, are expressions drawn from the fourth Gospel, and in its peculiar strain. But do not the synoptists represent Jesus as fully accepting the professedly divine testimony, "Thou art My beloved Son: in Thee I am well pleased"? And does he not claim universal obedience and imitation, as in the words, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls"? We cannot but here admire the superiority of these simple writers to their modern improvers. The Gospel Christ without stain, without confes-

sion, without prayer for pardon, is in harmony with himself and with every law of moral congruity; whereas this Christ of recent criticism, covering up under a fair exterior the blemishes which he must feel but never avows, is not so remote from the whited sepulchres that he denounces; and the picture violates every canon of truth and reason.

The *second* instance where a departure from the Gospel scheme lands in incoherence and absurdity, is in regard to *the alleged origin of super-human views of Christ's life and character*. According to the uniform testimony of the Gospels, Christ from the beginning understands his own dignity, and the nature of his mission as a Saviour by sacrifice; whereas his disciples, notwithstanding his frequent teaching, have very vague notions of his true greatness, and wholly fail to take in the meaning and necessity of his death, and by consequence the certainty and importance of his resurrection. It is only when Christ returns from the dead, and teaches his followers on these points from Scripture, that they begin to understand his true design, and are lifted up from the depression into which they had fallen, so as to be henceforth, after he has left them, suitable witnesses of these great truths to others. No part of the Gospel narrative is more natural or more

beautiful than this opening of minds blinded by prejudice, like the rest of their countrymen, to the real greatness of their Lord, and to the sacrificial character of the death which had so much afflicted them; but which they now see, through the lesson of his resurrection and his own instructions, to have been the needful path to the saving of mankind and to his own glory. But now mark how all this is, by modern criticism, dislocated and turned into utter chaos. According to some, Christ's own plan changes through stress of circumstances; and others, who save him from this weakness or crooked design, credit his followers with a fertility of expedient and a flexibility of character that go into the regions of the unreal and monstrous. Without the help of miracle, or word of the returning Christ, or prompting of any spirit higher than their own invention or fancy, they suddenly believe in an imaginary resurrection. In the depths of the darkest midnight, when overwhelmed by the catastrophe which has wrecked for ever their worldly hopes, they start into creators of a moral world of boundless novelty. They not only devise a resurrection of which previously they had heard nothing from Jesus or any other, but they read this into the Old Testament, and with it an entirely new conception of their Messiah. They raise their dead

Master not only to life but to divinity, finding for this also warrant in misapplied texts and oracles without number. They construct the Trinity, or at least its outline. They set up the Atonement, and make the failure of the Crucified the end of the law and the hope of the world. Thus these few dreamers, whose paralyzed faculties construct in a few days out of nothing the gigantic scheme which has exercised all the theologians of Christendom, go forth with an invincible enthusiasm begotten of disaster to try it upon the world, and by a marvel greater than its own origin, to succeed. Verily this is the romance of history, where the conjuror's wand plays havoc with all reality, and laws of nature, to escape miracle, are so twisted off their hinges as henceforth to lose all power of being shut or opened. We thus see the strength of the Gospel record when unbelief is challenged, instead of mere endless doubts, to produce its own solution, and this poor incoherent phantom starts from the grave to take the place and do the work of Him who was dead, and is alive for evermore.

II.

Having thus briefly surveyed the massive foundation of proof on which the reality of the time-hallowed gospel Story reposes, and which all the criticism and reconstructive hypotheses of our own age only bring into greater prominence, let us, as our *second* topic, endeavor to show how the personal Christ—living, sinless, divine—mingles with and adds strength to every argument for the truth of Christianity.

I. If we begin with evidences resting on divine *power* as bearing witness to Christianity, Christ is the visible centre of them all. The miracles of the Old Testament all lead up to him; those of the New all stream forth from his own person or through his messengers. A miracle may seem detached or difficult; but if connected with the great central miracle of the Incarnation, it acquires credibility and value. It is an earlier or later stroke in the same battle; and if the Son of God be really in the field, it is not wonderful that higher than mortal weapons should gather round him. The harmony between the inner and outer miracle is here complete; and when the rod of Christ's strength strikes the rock of natural law it is only reasonable that it should "turn the rock

into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters.”

The same consideration gathers up to this ultimate centre the argument from the success of Christianity. Though not the same display of power without means as absolute miracle is, this has been always justly reckoned a virtual and practical miracle. The argument has force when looked on simply as the working of God, through whom the weapons of this warfare become mighty; but at every point it is enhanced by connection with Christ, as presiding over the struggle and wielding all power in heaven and in earth. The sign of the cross, as in the vision of Constantine, whatever we think of that tradition, by stamping itself on all Christian victories gives them a more visibly divine character. The contrast between original weakness and ultimate triumph is more marked. The purity of the means—and with pure means alone Christianity connects this argument—recalls the simplicity, humility, and righteousness of the Founder of this kingdom. His church breaks forth as the expansion of his own power, silent and gradual, but invincible; and thus there is a unity in the process, which can be felt not only by Christians, but by unbelievers, and the secret conviction is inspired by the march of history that all things are put under his feet.

So is it with that argument from personal experience. Though it cannot be directly pleaded with unbelievers, it is with Christians the most signal of all acts of divine power, and renews in every Christian life the deepest side of the miracle of Damascus. For there is here contact with the personal Jesus in his risen life and greatness, in his power to stamp his image and to convey his will, so that this most subduing of all evidences, prolonged into the manifold experiences of a Christian life, and carrying with it a sense of liberty, peace, and nearness to God otherwise wholly unattainable, so visibly centres in Christ that it cannot even be conceived of without him, and is really the conscious reception and reproduction of his own life and character. Nor is this argument so incommunicable as has sometimes been alleged; for Christian experience has a power of irradiation even into dark and unsightly places; and wherever it goes it bears with it not only something of rebuke in Christ's name, but of hope to the most outcast and fallen that the dead may yet live again and the lost be found.

2. The evidences of Christianity that depend on divine *knowledge* as exerted on the side of the gospel, are all equally related to Christ. Limiting ourselves here to the evidence from prophecy (though other indications of supernatural knowl-

edge are found in Scripture), it is remarkable how natural prophecy becomes, as well as how much more forcible, when it ceases to be a mere heap of divinations or unconnected oracles, and points according to a settled and gradually developed plan to a central person in history—the divine Saviour. The greater, purer, brighter we make Christ, the more does the prophetic argument gain at every point. The Christ of the rationalist repels prophecy, not only from the prejudice against the supernatural, but quite as much because there is nothing in such a Christ to attract the eye of the whole world from the beginning. It is like kindling a star in the sky, and bringing the wise men all the way to Bethlehem to show them little, if anything, greater than themselves; and hence rationalism cannot for very shame accept the prophetic theory, but must seal up every ray of earlier Scripture that seems to point so far forward, and parcel out all the greatness that would naturally be concentrated in Christ amid all conceivable human subjects possible, with whom the prophets are supposed to have begun and ended.

It calls this guesswork of a human sagacity or longing, groping all round a limited horizon, and arrested everywhere by the local and temporal, a reasonable scheme. Yet it is put to sore distress, not only because the grand and sublime visions of

the prophets burst at every point through this narrow environment, but also because rationalism itself wants larger anticipations of a coming Deliverer to operate with, so as even fantastically and unreally to create the picture of a great future, and a great world-monarch in the heart of it, which might in so far account for Christianity by misread and over-colored fulfilment.

This is one of the most perplexing problems of the rationalism of our time, unable as it is to believe in prophecy, but compelled to believe in anticipation, yet driven back from the anticipation in its fulness, and torturing it at every point to speak with bated breath lest it should openly proclaim Christ. Nor is this its only affliction; for whereas by the uniformity of nature every religion should, like Christianity, have had another as its herald, and even every great personage a train of precursors to have, as in the case of Christ, opened his way and forecast his history, the phenomenon stands here alone, and its solitude cannot be accounted for.

In striking contrast to this felt littleness of rationalism, when its Christ is seen through the inverted end of the telescope, is the greatness of the ordinary Christianity, when the anticipative world of prophecy comes into its view, shaded, abrupt, and often impenetrable, but with a light,

a harmony, and a grandeur sufficient not only to warrant its own existence, but to attest the stupendous reality that was to come. It would have been possible to have given forth real prophecy that was remote from Christ. Some of it, in one sense, is so; as, for example, the predictions bearing on some of the ancient nations. But the strength of prophecy lies in its chain of references to Christ, from the first mention of the "Seed of the woman," to the virgin-born Immanuel; from the Sufferer, whose heel is bruised in terms of the earliest promise, to the "Man of sorrows" in the fifty-third of Isaiah; and from the peaceful Lawgiver of a yet uncrowned tribe, to the heir of David, who enters the long-established seat of rule as a king. Even the predictions that bear on the church of God and its universal progress are but the sequel to those which foretell the personal Christ, and they then reflect the light of his exaltation; nor can the judgments on the Jewish nation be dissociated, as the depth of their fall is but the measure of the grace and truth that were in Christ, and for rejecting which they were to be cast away.

Thus centralized in Christ, not only sinless, but divine, and in the fullest sense a Sacrifice and a Saviour, the prophecy of the Old Testament has a meaning, a coherence, a majestic onward move-

ment unparalleled in literature. But in proportion as it is isolated and detached from Christ, the more does all sink into twilight. When he is denied, prophecy becomes a mere *ignis fatuus* made up of vain and abortive fancies, flickering in the wastes of a history as flat and stagnant in the Old Testament as in the New, where indeed there is neither old nor new, but, under the boasted name of evolution, an eternal sameness, and the reign of the dreary inevitable law, "Ex nihilo nihil fit."

3. It is not difficult to show how the mass of evidence in Christianity, that builds upon the divine *wisdom* as shining forth in it, must also gather around the person and work of Jesus Christ. If the argument from design leads us to trace a Designer in nature, it does so not less in the economy of revelation. Christianity has a work to do or a problem to solve; and though the unbeliever cannot enter into this survey as the believer can, yet even he may see contrivance in salvation, and be self-condemned for rejecting it.

Now it is exactly in relation to Christ that this argument from adaptation comes in. The union in Christ of divinity and humanity is not a mere theological dogma or mystery, but an intelligible and practical arrangement for gaining the ends of salvation. Every one can see that if such a conjunction be possible, however the abstract theism

of Judaism, of Mohammedanism, and, we may add, of a rationalized Christianity, recoils from it, there are many beautiful fitnesses instantly impressed upon any saving scheme. The very appearance of Divinity on the field indicates the greatness and danger of the crisis produced by sin; and this, being thus laid down to start with, in harmony with the deepest voice of conscience, carries the resources of Deity everywhere—its strength and its tenderness—to meet at successive points the exigency, and to afford the guarantee that these shall not be applied in vain.

While the higher nature of Christ thus yields an unlimited reserve of power and grace, it is seen to be fitting that human sympathies and organs should also mingle in the work of man's redemption. How these were to be harmonized we could not have told beforehand; indeed we can hardly tell now that the God-man is before us. But that in this incarnation—the central and fundamental fact of Christianity—there is a wealth and a fulness of adaptation, otherwise altogether inconceivable, to remedial ends, the consent of the Christian church in all ages attests. The so-called offices of Christ are filled in with a grandeur and completeness self-evidently true. Revelation rises to its highest point in one who is not merely a messenger, but a partaker of divinity. Vicarious

suffering for sin becomes possible in human form, yet clothed with transcendent and illimitable merit. A universal dominion founded on grace enchains the affections, while it transforms the lives of its subjects. These provisions of Christianity strike all fair and open minds by their wisdom not less than by their grandeur and tenderness; and though they are resisted and overborne by the very evil they are designed to remedy, they not less leave their witness, and widely diffuse the secret, though, alas! in how many cases ineffectual, conviction that this religion is divine.

But is it not clear that the strength of this evidence is derived from the dependence of this whole system on Christ? It is made up of the power and sympathy of his incarnation, of the efficacy of his sacrifice, of the perfection of his example, and of the influence of his reign. And to deny that Christ, as he moves in the Gospel history, is the Author and Finisher of all, and to resolve all, were that possible, into some more obscure and transcendental action of the general divine will, would be to eclipse this whole argument from the manifold wisdom of God, and could only be exceeded in disaster by the denial of the end, not less than of this grand effectual means, so as to leave only a morality and a bare naturalism as the last issue of the so-called gospel

dispensation, without anything of redemption at all.

The wisdom that shines in the remedial provisions of Christianity is not less discernible in its history. Redemption grows from the faintest outline as a revelation to the perfect day. The history of the world unconsciously prepares for it. A special people rise up to guard quite as much as to develop it. Every step in their history is singular, and the occasional periods of it that want the miraculous are like the silent pauses out of which it is again born. When Christ's advent has filled the old channels to overflowing, it has to burst upon the world; and this law marks all its subsequent expansions, that it is a return of the life-blood to the heart that sends it forth again in fresh and ever-widening diffusion. There is not the least doubt that all the successive steps of Jewish history, from Abraham to Moses, from Moses to David, from David to the close of prophecy, and from the close of prophecy to the Incarnation, lead up to Christ, and become epochs from their relation to him. So, also, if the history of the Christian church teaches any lesson, it is that the recovery of clearness, of power, of victory lies in his name, and that the greatness of every truly great age, in doctrine or in work, lies in the prominence of that name.

How could this be unless Christ were the key to the whole of this progress, for progress, in spite of unaccountable stops, and even recessions, we must call it; and is there not here in the history, as truly as in the doctrine, a veiled yet discoverable wisdom; which centres in the supernatural Christ, and shows him to be alike the moving force and the last end of this apparently untraceable but really all-including system? The evidences from wisdom in Christianity and in connection with it may need reflection; but they are among the most solid, appealing to minds like Pascal and Butler, like Edwards and Neander, that can take in the sweep of a wide, though in many parts inscrutable, scheme; and of all the light that is in it—more than enough to counterbalance the darkness—the origin is to be found in Christ.

4. We now come to the *fourth* and crowning argument for the truth of Christianity, that drawn from the *reflection in it of the moral attributes of holiness and love in God*. Here, preëminently, the argument is wrought up with, and centres in, the life and work of Jesus Christ. We have here, to start with, the unspeakable advantage of a personal God in whom the moral law is enshrined. This is carried over from Judaism, with its faith alike in Jehovah and in the Decalogue; and thus

religion and morality spring up together. A shadow of this is found in the teaching of Plato, who makes virtue the imitation of God, and in Kant, who makes it obedience to sovereign will : but in the one, the element of law is too feeble; in the other, the personality of God is lost in moral order.

More wonderful perhaps is the glimpse of Plato, amid the darkness of paganism, into the indissoluble union between morality and religion, than the rediscovery by Kant, amid the obscured light of Christianity, of duty as an eternal, inviolable law. But Christianity starts with both a personal God and a moral law, and with both in their deepest principles and demands, which Christ has then to fulfil. He has to resemble or glorify God, not by the harmony of ordinary obedience, but by the bearing of penalty, for there is no law in the universe if penalty can be lightly set aside.

Those have totally mistaken the life of Christ, who, like Renan, have made it mainly genial or idyllic; or, like others, have seen in it only the evolution in normal circumstances of moral excellence. The solitude, the shadow, the cry, proclaim the burden and the woe—a heart filled with all human discords and sorrows not its own, yet accepting all with meekness and love—a

meekest and love that bow to the stroke of righteousness, and feel that to avert it from man is the greatest of divine tasks and favors. Thus the color of Christ's virtue is all sacrificial—red with the mark of blood, and yet transcendently greater than had it borne other wrong and contumely, but not the sin of the world. Out of the depths of this crushed and lonely heart there rises to heaven the fragrance of an unutterable devotion to God, and of an unfathomable compassion to man—a purity, a tenderness, a strength of sublime endurance, which float their influence downward through all time, and fill eternity with their memories. Ere long it is seen that this life and death, thus construed, are worthier of the Son of God, and adjust themselves better to the level of incarnation, than any other achievement of virtue; and while in the lower ranges of this history all human graces and sympathies find a home and a shelter, it is in this aspect that it towers to the very firmament, and sends down its floods of moral influence to make all things new.

It is the penal sufferings of the Lamb of God, and not the brightness of his other moral features, that strike the heart with the pangs of repentance, that melt the heart while they break it, and in reproducing something of his own agony in the soul originate a moral crisis there which

issues not in death, but in life. Then the attractions of obedience enchain the heart, when the sense of terror and of shame has given place to gratitude and moral admiration; and the imitation of Christ, so awful and even intolerable, when it lays upon the soul a new bondage of duty, becomes easy and irresistible when it is the effusion of love. No heart will open till the bar of guilt be first burst asunder; and though there be also a key needed to turn the lock by which human nature and habit are fixed in evil, it is Christ who, by the power of his Spirit, can accomplish this further extrication, yet not by other instrumental means than by the lesson of his atoning life and death, divinely urged and made the watchword of moral freedom.

Thus a perfect moral example, at the very point where it reaches its highest perfection, begins by its own surpassing charm of condescension and tenderness to work on the lowest and most fallen, and to invite them up the steps of its own grandeur and purity; whence we see the falsehood of the current idea, that the example which is most like ourselves, and the least raised above our own struggles and falls, is the best, at least for beginners in the race of holiness. The whole experience of the Christian church refutes this. Who have acted with the greatest power on our degraded

and criminal classes? Not their own companions, striving like themselves to raise their heads above the wide surrounding sea of evil; but the holiest men and women, who have come to them as ministering angels, who have recalled the image of good in all its loveliness, and by associating all with self-sacrificing kindness have given them the hope and the possibility of escape, otherwise almost as remote as if they had been abandoned for ever. Of this law of the attraction of the holy—if it be supremely kind, still more if it bring the news of pardon—Christ is the limit; and hence as of old to the publicans and sinners, and to all the wide family of the outcast and the miserable, he stretches down his loving arms; and high as he rises above them, he can still reach their level, and lift them upward with the call, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

It is a mighty proof of the blending of divine holiness and love in Christ’s remedial work, that his example never shifts away from those earliest lessons of the cross which first give peace to the troubled conscience, and then awake the trembling throb of a new and heaven-born existence. Christ has nothing greater to show, nothing more advanced to inculcate in the wide range of his own moral obedience. There has been a school

even of Christian theology and morality which has hastened away from Christ's death to his life; as if in the region of moral precept, whether more rare or more familiar, when the awful eclipse of suffering were lifted off, divine excellence shone out with a more winning and cheering ray. This is, however, to forget that the loftiest virtues of Christ start from the vale of humiliation; that the eye which reads in his sacrifice afresh the promise of pardon receives with equally new welcome the quick succeeding charge, "Follow thou me!" and that, while every virtue of Christ has its place and its lesson, those that come associated with the tenderest memories alike of his life and of ours must wing the soul nearest to heaven.

Here, then, is the problem for all moralists, reformers, teachers of the world, who deny the divine Christ. By what miracle of selection were the Bible writers who have drawn that stupendous picture led to connect all the transforming power of their system, not with separate precepts or laws of God, but with a living Saviour! And then how came it that when the more bright, serene, unshaded virtues of his life appeared to demand a more exhilarating and joyous pursuit, they with sure instinct, while not neglecting these, gave them the second place, and found the

deepest, purest, most unfailing well of all moral aspiration and impulse beneath the dark, and as it might even seem repulsive, shade of the cross and of the sepulchre! To this day this is to the world a mystery and a stumbling-block. But the laws of Christianity are not on that account suspended; their authority is not overthrown: "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live."

The last wonder of Christianity, then, as a remedy, is that it sets forth in God, and in Christ as the image of God, the supreme demands, at first sight irreconcilable, yet truly reconciled, of holiness and of love. Amid the storm and surge of sin, the holiness of God rises like a frowning wall to shut up every avenue to the regions of safety, and to wreck and dash in pieces every human hope. It is as when Ulysses, flung from the broken ship, was tossed day after day upon the boiling ocean, more afraid even of the breakers which revealed the land than of the billows which formed the peril of the sea.* It is the picture of a soul driven by the resistless tide of guilt against the eternal laws which guard the universe. But at length a rent is opened in the mighty barrier, where the gentle stream divides even the encircling rock; and by this unlooked-for inlet safety and shelter are found. It is the

* *Odyssey* V. 441.

emblem of heaven's greatest discovery—of the soul's best deliverance, the victory of love, not by breaking down and overturning justice, but by opening a pathway through it to salvation as wonderful as it is easy and effectual.

Here, then, is the summation of this cumulative argument, where every other evidence converges to the life and character of Jesus Christ. What other religion has such a mass of evidence in its favor, historic, prophetic, doctrinal, moral? What other religion, if it had any to adduce, could centralize all in the person of its founder? Not Confucianism; not Buddhism (attractive though in one sense the record of its founder be); not Brahminism, which has no commanding personality in its history; and as little Mohammedanism. These religions lie mainly outside the lives of their human authors. Why did not their authors in this way make these religions more strong, interesting, and likely to endure? They were as able on human principles as the original or secondary founders of Christianity, who here also strike clear off from philosophy, for what philosophy ever thought of constituting itself out of the biography of Socrates or Zeno, of Descartes or Hegel? If it had been a failure in the history of religion, the experiment would still have been singular. But it has been the secret of success,

and could not fail to be so; for a religion with the living God in the heart of it could not rise to anything higher, more unchanging, more attractive than its one incessant theme of Divine Redemption, nor could the gracious Providence which presided over its origin fall short of making its development and career as effectual, while as unexampled, as its birth.

When we speak of the wonderfulness of Christianity we must not neglect the future. It only among religions has at once an Alpha and an Omega. The future alone shall bring out its great proportions. It is said that in our century for the first time the master-works of Handel are fully disclosed as he conceived them. Their airs penetrate through vaster spaces; their choruses are borne up by mightier instruments and voices. So shall it be, if the comparison may be permitted, with that grander "Messiah" which is now, amid incredible struggle, breaking out in living music throughout the world. We have been long in the earlier parts, awed, no doubt, and cheered by the glorious strains, "Unto us a child is born;" "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd;" "Come unto me, all ye that labor;" but sunk also to the deepest minors, "Thy rebuke hath broken my heart," and perplexed in our strongest faith by the tremendous jars and dis-

cords, "All they that see him laugh him to scorn." But there shall come, like the sweep of innumerable armies, or the march of light, the unbounded, resistless advance, "Their line is gone out into all lands;" and the stupendous all-triumphant chorus shall shake earth and heaven, "Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" In these "great voices" may it be given to us, not without earlier note of preparation, to bear a part; and may it be, though with broken utterance, yet with true and growing concord, that we—all unworthy—now rehearse this grandest burst of time and prelude of eternity: The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever.



THE
UNITY OF THE CHARACTER
OF THE
CHRIST OF THE GOSPELS

A PROOF OF ITS HISTORICAL REALITY.

BY
REV. C. A. ROW, M. A.

ARGUMENT OF THE TRACT.

NOTHING is assumed but what is admitted by believers and unbelievers alike, viz., the existence of the Gospels, that they contain the portraiture of a great character which is the product of their conjoint contents, that the parts constitute a unity, and that the first three Gospels at least portray the same character from different points of view; and the conclusion is drawn that this unity is only consistent with their being the delineation of a historical reality. None of the negative theories propounded to account for the Gospels attempt to account for the origin of the portraiture. The two factors in the character, the divine and human, are inseparably united, and are marked by the same moral tone. The blending of benevolence and holiness, the loftiest self-assertion and the deepest humility, and the exquisite shading into one another of the other portions of the character, are such that it is inconceivable it could have been independently portrayed by a number of mythologists. The moral teaching of Jesus is so much above the age that it could not have been invented by the originators of the legends which are supposed to have formed the materials of the gospel narratives. The moral teaching grows out of the miraculous narrative in such a manner that the two cannot be separated. The tone of the miraculous narratives and of the teaching growing out of them is as lofty as the tone of the didactic portion. The theory of tendencies is refuted. The identity of the Synoptic and the Johannine Christ is vindicated, and the conclusion is drawn that the only alternative which satisfies all the conditions of the case is that the portraiture of the Christ of the Gospels is the delineation of a historical reality and not an ideal creation.

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OUR Lord's person, work, and teaching, as they are depicted in the Gospels, constitute the essence of Christianity, and render it certain, if they are historical realities, that Christianity is a divine revelation. Modern unbelief has not been slow to perceive this. Accordingly, although during the present century the old plan of assailing Christianity through an unsparing criticism of the Scriptures of the Old Testament has been pursued with the utmost vigor, its strongest efforts have been directed to capture what really constitutes the key and citadel of the Christian position, by attempting to prove that the Gospels, which constitute our only* source of information respect-

* It is a most remarkable fact that tradition has failed to hand down anything additional respecting our Lord's teaching and actions beyond what is recorded in the Gospels. The whole of the

ing our Lord's actions and teachings, are no true account of the life and teaching of the actual Jesus; but that although they may contain a few grains of historical truth, the bulk of their contents consists of a mass of myths, legends, and ideal creations which the credulity and enthusiasm of his followers have thrown around the historical Jesus.

The controversy thus engendered extends over a wide range of subject matter, both in the attack and in the defence. The writer of the present tract, however, proposes to concentrate the reader's attention on a single point of the evidence, under the firm persuasion that by itself it is conclusive of the entire question, viz., that the unity of the portraiture of the Christ of the Gospels proves that it is the delineation of a historical

Patristic writings contain only about twelve additional incidents of this kind, and those of a very unimportant character, two or three of which savor strongly of the apocryphal. These really add nothing to our knowledge of his teaching or his actions. Yet there can be no doubt that traditionary reminiscences of both were current as late as the first half of the second century, and that they must have been rife at an earlier period. The fact of their existence is directly affirmed by Papias in the extract of his writings which has been preserved by Eusebius. He states that he himself preferred these reminiscences to written documents. But his testimony is hardly required, for the thing itself is inherently probable; and the authors of the Gospels themselves inform us that our Lord did and uttered many things which they have not recorded. A recorded speech of St. Paul contains one saying, and the remainder of the New Testament not one. Respecting those Gospels called apocryphal some observations will be made below.

reality, and is utterly inconsistent with the theory that it is an ideal creation.

The following facts, which will form the foundation of the argument, must be admitted to be true by believers and unbelievers alike.

First. The Gospels exist.

Secondly. Whatever theory may be propounded respecting their origin or the nature of their contents, they contain the portraiture of a great character, that of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Thirdly. That this character is composed of a multitude of parts, i. e., it is the product of their conjoint contents.

Fourthly. That the parts of which it is composed constitute a harmonious unity.

Fifthly. That in three, at least, of the four Gospels, in St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke, which are commonly called the Synoptics, and as we believe, and shall prove below, in the fourth also, we possess different portraitures of the same character, the only difference between them being that they have been taken by their respective authors from somewhat different points of view.

My position is that this unity is only consistent with the portraiture having been the delineation of a historical reality, and is utterly inconsistent with the theory which affirms that the Gospels

consist of a mass of myths, legends, and ideal creations.

Now as it is certain, whatever account may be propounded of the origin of the Gospels, that the portraiture exists in them, its origin must be accounted for. I ask, therefore, how did it get there?

One theory affords a rational account of its presence, viz., that it is the delineation of a character that actually existed, copied from the life. This fully satisfies all the conditions of the case; no other theory which unbelief has succeeded in propounding affords an account of its origin which sound reason can accept.

What then is the course which modern unbelievers have pursued in dealing with this subject? While they affirm that the Gospels are unhistorical, they fully admit that they are bound to give a rational account of how they came into existence. Numerous theories, which vary in detail, have been propounded for this purpose. All that is essential in these may be reduced under the four following heads:

1. The Naturalistic theory, now utterly abandoned as hopelessly inadequate.
2. The Mythic theory.
3. The Legendary theory.
4. A theory which for the sake of brevity may

be designated the Evolution theory, or the theory of tendencies. This theory, however, involves a liberal use of myths, legends, and ideal inventions, in the formation of the materials out of which our present Gospels were composed.

The reader should observe that, singular to say, these theories have been propounded, not to account for the origin of the portraiture, but of the narratives, and especially of its superhuman elements. My contention is that no theory which fails to give a rational account of the origin of the portraiture can be accepted as affording a true account of the origin of the narratives, for the obvious reason that the portraiture is the conjoint effect of the narratives.

This is obvious, yet strange to say, it is a point which has been universally overlooked by those who impugn the historical character of the Gospels. Not a single writer on this side of the question, as far as I am aware, has deemed it necessary to show how it is possible, if the Gospels are such as they are affirmed to be, viz., a mass of myths, legends, and ideal creations, for the portraiture ever to have got there; nor have any of them attempted to meet the objection which its presence obviously suggests to the truth of their theories. Yet it is evident the theory which fails to account for the origin of the portraiture

can be no true account of the origin of the narratives.

I now ask the reader's attention to the following points connected with the portraiture, which render the theory that it is an ideal creation simply incredible.

1. The Gospels not only contain the delineation of a character, but of one which even a large majority of eminent unbelievers allow to be the greatest which has either existed in fact or which has been invented by fiction. It also possesses this remarkable characteristic, that it is capable of evoking the admiration alike of the most simple-minded and the most intellectual of men. It is, in fact, the most catholic of characters, and one which speaks more powerfully than any other to the higher affections of man.

2. It is evidently not an artificial creation, such as we meet with in ordinary historians and poets. These are in the habit of giving elaborate delineations of the characters of their heroes which are the embodiment of the views of their characters which the writers designed to impress on the minds of their readers. Their characters are not the combined result of the facts which they narrate, but are the artificial creations of the poets or historians. To take an example. The works of Lord Clarendon, or Macaulay, abound with delin-

eations of this description; but they are pictures which are the creations of the historian. Precisely similar is it with the poets. Their characters are artificial elaborations out of their own consciousness, or aided by such historical materials as they possessed, the details of which are filled up and colored by the imagination. The point to which I ask the reader's attention is that all such delineations are evidently artificial.

But in the evangelists, this artificial character is absolutely wanting. This is palpable to every reader. Nothing can be more artless than the structure of the Gospels. It is impossible to read them without rising from their perusal with the conviction that it was not the purpose of their authors to delineate a character, but to compose a narrative which should be a record of the actions and teaching of Jesus Christ. The creation of the character is the indirect—I may say, the accidental result of this purpose. Still the character is conspicuous on their pages. Yet, as I have said, it is impossible to find, from one end of the Gospels to the other, anything which bears the smallest resemblance to an artificial delineation.

Another remarkable fact deserves attention. While there can be no doubt that their authors were penetrated with the profoundest admiration for the person of their Master, yet never once do

they dilate on his great qualities. They contain no bursts of admiration at his benevolence, the dignity of his demeanor, his humility, his patience, his perfect sinlessness, the perfection of his holiness, or his self-sacrifice. All that they do is to record his actions and discourses with scarcely a comment or remark. They have even scarcely a hard word to say of his opponents, although they must have regarded the chief agents in bringing about his execution as the worst of murderers. The strongest word of denunciation which they have is that of "traitor," which St. Luke, and "thief," which St. John, applies to Judas, the other two evangelists being content with designating him as "the man who delivered Him up." In this respect the Gospels form a striking contrast to the Epistles. Their authors are constantly bursting out in admiration at his greatness, his humility, his meekness, and his self-sacrificing love, and habitually propound the perfection of his character as a subject for the imitation of believers, and to which they should strain their utmost efforts to grow. They even occasionally present us with a brief delineation of him as a patient sufferer. In a word, he is the object around which the affections of their writers and the different members of the churches centre. The absence of this from the Gospels, therefore,

cannot have been due to insensibility in their authors, but to the fact that the purpose of composing a record of his life and teaching held exclusive possession of their thoughts. Yet, despite the absence of the smallest conscious attempt to delineate a character, they have done so more effectually than any of the poets, historians, or biographers of the past or of the present.

3. What then forms the character, and of what does it consist? Evidently it is made up of the combined effect of the various narratives which compose the Gospels; and it results from simply placing them in juxtaposition in the order in which they stand in the evangelists. It is also clear that the effect produced is not dependent on a skilful arrangement of the parts. I draw attention to this for the purpose of showing how completely inartificial is its production. How then has it originated? The design of the evangelists in composing their Gospels, as is stated by two of them, was to edify believers and to instruct them in the principles of Christianity. To effect this they have given us four narratives of our Lord's teaching and actions, and in doing it they have produced a result which they evidently did not contemplate, viz., they have set before their readers that most perfect of all delineations, the Christ of the Gospels.

Now the parts of which this portraiture consists are extremely numerous; and if the theory of those whose views I am controverting is correct, they consist of a mass of legends and ideal creations, spontaneously elaborated by various persons at different times, without the smallest intention of delineating a character. Yet it is beyond dispute that they adjust themselves into a harmonious whole; for, as a matter of fact, the portraiture spontaneously arises before the mental vision of every reader. Further, while the Jesus of the evangelists is depicted in a wide range of action, in a great variety of circumstances, and often in the most trying situations, and while the discourses which are attributed to him embrace an extensive range of subject, the unity of the character is preserved throughout.

4. Next observe, the portraiture is composed of two factors, a divine and a human element. The former consists of the miraculous narrative of the Gospels, and of those portions of the discourses in which our Lord directly affirms his own superhuman character, or makes declarations which are only consistent with the consciousness that he possessed it. These portions of the Gospels unbelievers are unanimous in affirming to be either mythical, legendary, or ideal additions to the actions and teaching of the real Jesus, which have

been attributed to him by the enthusiasm of his followers.

This being so, I ask the reader's attention to a fact of the greatest importance in this controversy, which he can easily verify for himself. As far as the moral coloring is concerned, it is impossible to discern any difference between this superhuman element and the other portions of the narrative. In this respect the divine and the human Jesus are precisely alike. Both bear indubitable marks of having been stamped with the same die. Instead of there being in the Gospels two Jesuses, a divine and a human one, both factors insensibly shade into each other, and blend together into a harmonious unity. So intimate is the union in the pages of the evangelists that it is simply impossible to separate the superhuman from the human Jesus without making the entire narrative a mass of confusion. It is evident, therefore, if the human elements are historical and the superhuman unhistorical, that those who invented the latter must have been penetrated with the elevated moral tone which is characteristic of the former.

The following shows the importance of this consideration. Mr. Mill, in his "Posthumous Essays," expresses the opinion that it is inconceivable that the Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels can be an ideal creation, on the ground that his

character is one which is absolutely above the conceptions of his followers, of the primitive Christians, or even of the apostle Paul, to have invented. But while he makes this admission, he affirms that it is quite possible that His followers may have invented any number of the miracles which have been attributed to him. Although Mr. Mill does not say so, I consider that I am justified in inferring that he would include among these supernatural elements all our Lord's lofty affirmations respecting himself; for if he was not conscious of an indwelling presence of the superhuman, those utterances would have been in the highest degree presumptuous, and utterly inconsistent with that moral elevation which Mr. Mill justly attributes to the Jesus of the Synoptics. On the other hand, he directly affirms that the contents of the fourth Gospel, which he designates a mass of poor stuff, might have been produced in almost any quantities by his followers.

This being so, the reader will at once perceive the importance of the fact to which I now draw attention, that the moral aspect of the superhuman and the human elements in the Gospels is precisely similar. If it is impossible to believe that the latter can have been an invention of the followers of Jesus because it stands at an eleva-

tion far above their conceptions, the same reason is equally applicable to the former. Further, if the latter are affirmed to be historical and the former unhistorical, then it is evident that those who invented the former must have been interpenetrated with the elevated moral tone which is characteristic of the latter—a moral tone which Mr. Mill would certainly not attribute to a number of credulous mythologists. The whole question, therefore, resolves itself into one of simple fact: is the moral elevation of the superhuman elements of the Gospels on a level with that of the human ones? We affirm that it is.

For the necessary proofs we refer the reader not merely to a number of detached passages, but to the entire Gospels. The New Testament is accessible to every reader, and he can test the truth of the above affirmation for himself by a careful perusal of their contents. If he will do so, I have no doubt that he will arrive at the conclusion that the moral aspects of the superhuman and the human Jesus are precisely the same, and that they so insensibly blend into each other in the Gospel narrative that it is impossible to separate the one from the other.*

* I would refer the reader to the following, among many passages, as examples of this blending: Matthew 5, the whole chapter. I might add the entire Sermon on the Mount, in which Je-

Such are some of the more striking facts on the surface of the Gospels which are obvious to every reader. How, then, do those who impugn their historical character account for the existence of these facts?

Stated briefly, their theory is as follows: The historical Jesus was a very great man, who succeeded in attaching to himself a number of enthusiastic and credulous followers. These imagined him to be the Messiah of certain old predictions; and believing that the Messiah must do such and such things, they fondly imagined that Jesus actually performed them. This tendency greatly increased during the century which followed his death. Numerous ideologists invented a number of stories which ascribed to him a superhuman character and the possession of miraculous powers, and the credulity of the primitive believers

Jesus is depicted as acting the part of legislator of the kingdom of God, and as enunciator of its laws on His own sole authority, and even enlarging and annulling precepts which both he and his hearers accepted as precepts unquestionably divine. A similar assertion of authority pervades the whole of his moral teaching: Matthew 10: 32-42; Matthew 11: 25-30; Matthew 19: 27-29, including the context from ver. 25; Matthew 25: 31-46; Matthew 26: 64, including the entire narrative of the passion and betrayal; John 11, John 13. To these should be added every one of the miraculous narratives, including their entire context, in which our Lord is depicted as performing his miracles without any reference to a higher power or authority than his own, and those in which by his sole authority he undertakes to forgive sins.

led them to mistake these stories for the facts of his historic life. The result was that the historic Jesus became gradually metamorphosed into a mythic hero, and the real events of his life became buried under a mass of myth, legend, and ideology. In this state of things the authors of our first three Gospels took these legendary reminiscences in hand, and with the aid of a certain number of documents which were already in existence, composed their respective Gospels, which speedily acquired such a degree of popularity among the primitive believers that they have caused all the other legendary accounts to sink into oblivion, except those which happen to have been preserved in those eighteen compositions which are commonly designated the Spurious Gospels. The fourth Gospel, on the other hand, is affirmed to be a deliberate forgery, the work of some Christian, bent on glorifying his Master, who was deeply imbued with the principles of the Alexandrine philosophy. These theories, it is true, have been propounded with considerable variations, but what I have here stated will be sufficient to put the reader in possession of their general substance. Such is the account which modern unbelief propounds of the origin of the portraiture. The following are some of the impossibilities involved in it:

According to the theories which I am controverting, the inventors of the legendary matter out of which our present Gospels were composed must have been a numerous body. This is not only conceded by those against whose views I am contending, but it necessarily results from the fact that it was a gradual growth. It is also certain from the nature of the case that mutual consultation was impossible, inasmuch as the mythologists were the members of churches widely separated from each other.

What then are we asked to accept as the true account of the origin of the portraiture in place of the natural one that it is the delineation of a historical reality? We are invited to believe that a body of ideologists spontaneously engaged in the work of inventing a number of imaginary stories and attributing them to Jesus; that the three first evangelists made a selection out of a large mass of such stories, and by simply weaving them into a narrative their respective Christs have emerged, each a unity in itself, and all three constituting a common unity. This is the theory which we are asked to accept of the origin of the different narratives which compose the Gospels, and consequently of the portraiture, for it is the conjoint effect of the narratives.

The reader will perhaps wonder that the crea-

tion of the entire character has not been ascribed to a single ideologist; but this is so opposed to all the historical conditions of the case that such a theory has not been propounded by a single unbeliever of eminence. Let it be observed that the only model which the inventors of the portraiture could have had to assist them was that of the Messiah as delineated in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, a certain number of apocryphal writings of which the book of Enoch was the chief, and the popular Messianic conceptions of the day. But the assistance which these writings could have afforded them must have been indefinitely small, because among other differences of character, the Messiah of the Old Testament is usually depicted under the image of a triumphant warrior who tramples his foes beneath his feet, whereas the Jesus of the Gospels is the Christ of peace, and One who denies to his followers the use of carnal weapons to promote his cause. The Messiah of the book of Enoch is a superhuman being, without one human trait; and the leading idea of the Messiah of popular expectation was that of a hero who would break the Roman yoke from off the neck of the Jewish people and exalt them to universal rule. To all such ideas the Christ of the Gospels forms a striking contrast. It is certain, therefore, that the ideologists, if they had

used any of the above materials as their model, would have depicted a Christ widely different from the delineation which is set before us in the pages of the evangelists.

Now, according to the theories of those whose views I am controverting, the Gospels are a natural growth out of the moral and religious ideas and the Messianic conceptions of the times. These were beyond all question earthly and carnal. The mythologists therefore must have made a start of some kind in advance of the moral and spiritual atmosphere in the midst of which they lived; for the Christ of the Gospels is beyond all question a spiritual Christ, and his moral teaching is a morality of the greatest elevation. It follows, therefore, as mutual consultation among the fabricators of the myths and legends which compose our Gospels was out of the question, that they must have spontaneously arrived at the same conclusion as to the style of character with which the Christ ought to be invested. The reader will, I think, be of opinion that such a supposition is incredible.

But another alternative may be suggested. The authors of our present Gospels, out of the large mass of materials at their command, may have selected only such as were of a certain type, and by rejecting the remainder have consigned

them to oblivion. This supposition, however, is only a little less incredible than the previous one; for it is essential to the theory in question to assume that the primitive believers (the mythologists included) were to the last degree credulous and superstitious. Now, such people when they invent myths and legends, as all past history testifies, invariably invent such as are of a low type. Whence then did the authors of our Gospels get their supply of stories of a high moral elevation? or even if such were available, how has it come to pass that they have uniformly rejected everything which was mean and contemptible, and incorporated into their narratives only what was elevated and moral? To this question it is impossible to give a satisfactory answer.

But further, our present Gospels have superceded this mass of current legendary matter. How was this to be effected? The taste of credulous and superstitious enthusiasts is for the grotesque; and the theory in question affirms the primitive believers to have been credulous and superstitious enthusiasts. How then were they to be induced to accept a set of stories of an elevated type as the only true account of the life and actions of the Founder of the church, in the place of the current ones so congenial to their taste? Yet as

a matter of fact they were thus accepted, and have consigned the others (with the exception of the contents of the spurious Gospels) to a well-merited oblivion.

Happily, however, we are not left in doubt as to the kind of fictions which credulous mythologists invent. In these spurious Gospels we possess a number of such fictions, of which the person of our Lord forms the centre. To two of these are assigned as early a date as the end of the first half of the second century; the remainder are of a later date. They enable us to know for certain what was the class of actions which during these times writers of fiction were in the habit of ascribing to our Lord. The incidents which they record are confined to two periods of his life, viz., his childhood and early boyhood, on which our Gospels are all but silent, and his passion and resurrection; and they omit the history of his ministry and teaching. The miracles which they attribute to him are for the most part of a most grotesque character, and are devoid of all moral impress. They are almost too painful for quotation, being little better than caricatures of the Holy One of God. I have elsewhere drawn a brief contrast between the Jesus of these Gospels and the Jesus of the evangelists, and I cannot give the reader a better idea of their contents than by quoting it:

“The case stands thus: Our Gospels present us with the picture of a glorious Christ; the mythic Gospels with that of a contemptible one. Our Gospels have invested him with the highest conceivable form of human greatness; the mythic ones have not ascribed to him a single action which is elevated. In our Gospels he exhibits a superhuman wisdom; in the mythic ones a nearly equal superhuman absurdity. In our Gospels he is arrayed in all the beauty of holiness; in the mythic ones this aspect is entirely wanting. In our Gospels not one stain of sinfulness defiles his character; in the mythic ones the boy Jesus is both pettish and malicious. Our Gospels exhibit to us a sublime morality; not a single ray of it shines in those of the mythologists. The miracles of the one and the other are contrasted in every point. A similar opposition of character runs through the whole current of their thought, feeling, morality, and religion.” (“The Jesus of the Evangelists,” p. 381.)

Such is mythology when it undertakes to deal with the person of our Lord. The supposition that the great character of the Gospels is the creation of a number of credulous and superstitious enthusiasts is therefore simply incredible.

The character of the Christ of the Gospels is admitted even by unbelievers to be one of the

greatest elevation. Consequently, if it is an ideal creation, it is entitled to rank among the most perfect works of art; in fact, it is a work of art, just as great poems, paintings, and statues are works of art. Now these latter are never produced at hap-hazard, but are the creations of persons endowed with lofty genius. If, therefore, the Christ of the Gospels has resulted from the labors of a number of mythologists (which is the theory of my opponents), it follows that those who assisted at its creation must have been persons of lofty genius and moral elevation.

The application of this theory to some acknowledged work of art, be it poem, painting, or statue, will render its absurdity manifest. Let us suppose that a character which runs through the entire action of a poem forms a consistent unity; that both poem and character are admitted to belong to a very high order of such compositions, and are the result of the labors of a considerable number of poets who spontaneously delineated the different parts of which it is composed. But as the whole is made up of the parts, it is necessary to assume that a number of persons of high poetic genius must have spontaneously concurred in its production. In a similar manner, if we were asked to believe that a celebrated painting or statue originated in a similar way, it would be

necessary to assume the coexistence of a numerous body of eminent artists, who either by consent or chance devoted themselves to the elaboration of the various parts, which when put together compose the picture or the statue; and that these different fragments, when put together, formed not only a unity, but a painting or a statue of the highest artistic merit.

A single illustration will enable the reader to appreciate the absurdity of such a position. There is in the picture gallery of the Louvre a celebrated painting called "The Marriage of Cana in Galilee." It consists of a very considerable number of figures in a common grouping, all of which shade into each other and form a harmonious unity of conception. Let us apply to this painting the theory which we are invited to accept as affording a rational account of the origin of the Gospels, and consequently of the portraiture which they contain. If, then, the picture is not the work of a single artist, but of a multitude of artists, each of them, in accordance with the above theory, must have spontaneously painted a number of figures, from which, when a selection had been made, and the selected figures were skilfully placed side by side, this celebrated picture was formed. This is simply incredible. Yet it is an undeniable fact that the theory which we are in-

vited to accept as affording a rational account of the origin of the Gospels, and consequently of the portraiture of their Christ, is encumbered with far greater difficulties; for its fabricators, instead of being men of lofty genius and moral elevation, are, owing to the necessities of the above theory, affirmed to have been a body of credulous and superstitious enthusiasts.

The reader will probably wish to be informed why those who have propounded the different theories which I am combating encumber themselves with the assumption that the primitive believers were a body of credulous and superstitious enthusiasts. The reason is that it is necessary to do so to enable them to account for the ready acceptance of the various miracles, which were attributed to Jesus as actual facts of his real life, while in truth he himself performed none.

But not only does the legendary spirit involve a low moral ideal (for this is an invariable accompaniment of extreme credulity and superstition), but according to theories widely current among unbelievers, these particular legends must have been the creations of men who were at once narrow-minded, credulous, and, I may say, fanatically enthusiastic. Yet they are destitute of a single trait of fanaticism, and contain, as I have observed, scarcely any indication of enthusiasm.

Still more, according to the theories of modern unbelief, the communities in the midst of which the legends originated were animated by a strong party spirit, which split them up into a number of contending sects. What effect would this have produced on the legends evolved in such societies? They would certainly be deeply tinged with their moral impress, and they would bear the indubitable marks of narrow-mindedness, bigotry, and fanaticism. Each sect also would have elaborated a set of legends in conformity with its own tastes; and as the Judaizing party was the predominant one among the primitive followers of Jesus, they would certainly have invented legends which were the counterparts of their own narrow-mindedness and intolerance. But, as a matter of fact, no such spirit is impressed on the narrative of a single action which is attributed to our Lord. Great, therefore, must have been the unanimity of the inventors, and their moral ideal preëminently lofty!

I now ask the reader's attention to a few facts in illustration of the difficulties which the ideologists must have overcome before they could have succeeded in delineating the various parts of which this great character is composed.

1. They must spontaneously have concurred in delineating a character which beyond all ques-

tion exhibits a combination of the divine and the human in a single personality. The character portrayed in the Gospels is obviously not the delineation of one which is divine throughout, nor of one which is purely human; but it is composed of a union of the superhuman and the human. The problem would have been comparatively easy of solution if a single mythologist had proposed to himself to delineate a character which should exhibit either of these separate from the other; but when they are to be delineated in combination the problem becomes extremely complicated as to the proportion in which the superhuman and the human are to enter into the character, and how they are to be made insensibly to shade into each other and form a harmonious unity. But immeasurably greater would have been the difficulty if a number of mythologists had spontaneously engaged in elaborating portions of a character of this description, which, when combined, or even a selection of them, should form a unity. Yet it is a simple fact that the Christ of the Gospels does exhibit this unity, and that the two factors shade into each other with exquisite perfection.

2. They must also have concurred in delineating a character which is the most perfect manifestation of benevolence, tempered with the per-

fection of holiness, and they have at the same time invested it with an aspect of stern severity when brought into contact with certain forms of moral evil. I draw attention to this point because the whole range of literature which bears on this subject proves that the diversity of opinion—how these three attributes are to be exhibited in combination in the same character—is very wide; not a few contending that the perfection of benevolence requires the exclusion of the sterner aspects of holiness. Yet these aspects of character, as they are depicted by the evangelists, unite together in the portraiture of our Lord with an exquisite harmony; nor do the Gospels contain an indication of the existence of a single legend which portrayed him otherwise. In this respect its unity is complete.

3. Numerous as must have been the mythologists, they all have concurred in attributing to Jesus absolute unselfishness. If we read the Gospels from one end to the other we shall not detect in him one single selfish trait. It follows, therefore, that none of the numerous legends out of which the character has been composed could have depicted him as stirred to anger by a sense of personal injury or animated by a single motive of self-interest. Still, anger is not infrequently ascribed to him; but it is invariably aroused by

the extreme form of moral obliquity. Further, nowhere is this unselfishness more strongly exhibited than in the miraculous narratives, which, according to the theory I am combating, must have been all legendary inventions.

4. Equally unanimous must they have been in attributing to our Lord a self-consciousness of the highest greatness in combination with the most perfect humility. I say self-conscious greatness, because the self-assertion which is attributed to the Christ of the Gospels is of the strongest possible character. It is such as would be simply extravagant in the mouth of any other man; in fact it would have been profane; and its extravagance is greatly increased by the humble position of the utterer. Now nothing would have more taxed the skill of a poet or a novelist than to make the parts of such a character harmonize with one another in an ideal delineation. Probably no more difficult problem could be presented to either; yet both fit into one another in the Jesus of the evangelists with an exquisite harmony, and are preëminently conspicuous in his miraculous actions. But his self-assertion, great as it is, is never obtrusive; and while our Lord is uniformly depicted as conscious of supreme worthiness, he is invariably clothed in a garment of humility. These are traits the fine touches of which defy

all power of imitation, yet they underlie the entire structure of the Gospels. A single ideologist would have found the delineation of this portion of the character a work of the greatest difficulty; yet, according to the theory I am controverting, not only must the numerous mythologists of primitive Christianity have been unanimous in attributing these exquisite traits of character to Jesus, but they have succeeded in delineating them to perfection.

5. Equally unanimous must they have been in attributing the ideal of moral perfection to the character which they invented; and still more remarkable is it that they must have agreed in what the ideal of moral perfection consisted. We know as a matter of fact that there has been a wide diversity of opinion as to the mode and degree in which the various virtues ought to be combined so as to form a perfect character. Yet the delineators of the portraiture of the Jesus of the evangelists must in some way or other have arrived at an unconscious unanimity, for no trait of discord can be found in it throughout. Further, it is the universal tendency of mankind, and preëminently of the ancient world, to ascribe the highest place to the heroic and political virtues, and a lower one to the milder and more unobtrusive ones. But in the Christ of the Gospels, while the heroic

ones are not wanting, they are subordinate to the milder aspects of his character. Here again the numerous mythologists must have unanimously arrived at a conclusion the very opposite of which the almost unanimous opinion of the times would have urged them to adopt.

6. The suffering Christ is a marvellous delineation, and so important is the place which it occupies, that in point of space the history of the passion fills about three-seventeenths of the entire Gospels. But, as we have seen, the mythologists unanimously agreed in attributing to their ideal Christ a superhuman character. The problem which must have presented itself to their minds must therefore have been an extremely complicated one—how such a character was to be depicted as a sufferer. Here the whole course of ancient literature, even if they had been acquainted with it, would have furnished them with no model; for if they had used as such the few instances of this kind in the ancient poets, they would have conducted them wide of the Christ of the Gospels. Witness the Prometheus of Æschylus. Nor with the exception of two, viz., the twenty-second Psalm and the fifty-third of Isaiah, would the Messianic delineations of the Old Testament have guided them nearer to it; and these two could only have furnished them with the

barest outline, not easy to reconcile with the other Messianic delineations. Further, in attempting to depict the Messiah as a patient sufferer, the whole current of popular thought was against them. Yet their portraiture of the suffering Christ is consistent throughout. No discordant trait mars its harmony. He is all submission to his Father's will, he is calm, he is dignified in the presence of his persecutors, he is absolutely patient under the acutest sufferings. What can surpass the dignity or the self-possession of the scene before Pilate, or the patience of the Sufferer on the cross? But, further: the extremity of suffering concentrates the thoughts exclusively on self. Not so is it in the case of the Jesus of the Gospels. Yet it is human to be perturbed at suffering, even at the prospect of it, and the Sufferer of the Gospels is not only conceived of as superhuman, but as human also—how, then, were these factors to be brought into harmony? The answer of the Synoptic Gospels is the scene at Gethsemane. Who shall describe it after them? The entire account of the Passion is a unity throughout. If, therefore, a mythic element enters into it, the mythologists must have been unanimous as to the mode of its delineation. Its execution is so perfect that a writer not too favorably disposed to Christianity has put into the

mouth of a fictitious character what are believed to have been his own sentiments, that if the death of Socrates was worthy of a philosopher, the Passion of Jesus, as it is delineated in the Gospels, is worthy of a God.

7. Renan has expressed the opinion that no character, whether real or ideal, approaches that of Jesus in the closeness of his consciousness of God, and in his intimate perception of his moral fatherhood. If I understand him rightly, he considers this to be a real trait in the character of the historical Jesus, though it is very difficult to understand how it is consistent with his theories respecting the large amount of legendary matter which is incorporated in the Gospel narratives. But, at any rate, the presence of so large an amount of historic truth in their pages, which Renan's position presupposes, is inconsistent with the theories which are currently accepted by modern unbelievers. He has, however, only stated a fact which must be patent to every reader of the Gospels, viz., that the Christ is uniformly depicted as possessing a most intimate consciousness of God and of his Fatherhood in relation to Himself, and as teaching the great truth of His fatherhood of mankind. The fact thus noted by Renan may be more accurately stated as follows: Their Christ is depicted as uniformly conscious of the indwell-

ing of the divine. Instances of this may be found in nearly every page, but especially when he acts the part of a moral teacher, enunciating, as he does, the laws of the kingdom of heaven on his own sole authority, when he works his miracles, and in the closeness of his communion with God. If, then, the portraiture is an ideal one, the mythologists must have spontaneously arrived at an agreement as to how, in these aspects of it, it was to be delineated; for the character in these respects is unique, and they were absolutely without a model to aid them in the delineation; yet they have succeeded in successfully embodying the idea over an extensive area of dramatized action. The reader must form his own opinion whether the above theory affords a rational account of the unity of the conception, which, in the points above referred to, indubitably pervades the entire narrative of the Gospels and the portraiture of their Christ.

8. The Gospels are set in a historic framework, i. e., they contain very numerous allusions to the history, manners, customs, modes of thought, and circumstances of the times during which the events which they profess to record occurred. It is true that the correctness of some few of these have been called in question by hostile critics; yet it is beyond question that the bulk of them

(and they are very numerous) have been verified. The reader can readily form an estimate of the difficulty with which the attempt to set ideal creations in a historical framework is attended by simply bringing under review the works of fiction with which he is acquainted. He will find that poets and novel writers, even of the highest eminence, when they dramatize their characters over an extensive sphere of action, very imperfectly succeed in adjusting them to the actual facts of history. This is even the case with Shakespeare, of which any one may satisfy himself by reading those of his historical plays of which certain events in Roman history form the groundwork. The characters and the sentiments attributed to them are really modern ones ticketed with Roman names. Thus, to adduce one or two instances, the poet has confounded between the two Brutuses, Decimus and Marcus, supposing that the latter was Cæsar's favorite, whereas it was the former. He makes Marcus proclaim himself to be free from the vice of paltry pelf, with the gains of which he avers that he will never defile his hands; yet we know from Cicero's letters that this paragon of Roman virtue was an extortioner, and was ready to enforce payment of his debts by means so unhallowed that the great orator, although his friend, refused to allow of his doing so

during his administration of Cyprus and Cilicia, though a former governor had actually conceded to his agent the use of a troop of horse, who closely besieged the senate of Salamis, until some of its members died of starvation. The debt was a loan, on which the interest was at the rate of 48 per cent. per annum. He is also made to address the mob in the Forum, who called themselves the Roman people, as "Friends, Romans, countrymen!" No Roman orator would ever have used these or similar expressions. So again, he is made to address senators as "My Lords," a term which the Emperor Tiberius said, when it was attempted to be addressed to himself, was only fit to be used by slaves to their masters. In speeches in the senate the uniform mode of address was "Conscript Fathers"—"Patres Conscripti." It would be easy to adduce a number of similar instances from the writings of the poet, but these will be sufficient to give the reader an idea of the thing intended. If, then, the greatest of dramatists has conspicuously failed in accurately portraying the historical persons whom he professes to delineate, their habits and modes of thought, and making them fit in with the historical facts of the times, I need hardly say that the difficulties must have been great indeed which must have encumbered the credulous mythologists who invented the

mythical and legendary stories of which our Gospels are alleged to be chiefly composed, to adjust their inventions to the facts of history and to the geography of the places in which the scenes are alleged to have occurred. Yet the allusions made in these to current ideas and events are far more numerous than those in the plays in question, and most of them are of the most incidental character; yet every discovery in history proves their correctness, even in those cases which in former times have been made subjects of dispute. The simple truth is, that the more history has been explored, the more their historical accuracy has been vindicated. The common sense of the reader will therefore lead him to conclude that the difficulties would not only have been great, but insuperable.

9. No small portion of the Gospels is occupied with giving an account of our Lord's moral teaching, in which I include his parabolic utterances. Unbelievers of the type of the late J. S. Mill are ready to accept the moral teaching of the Synoptic Gospels as the actual moral teaching of the historic Jesus, while they deny everything in him which savors of the supernatural. This position, however, even if it could be admitted to be the true solution of the facts, leaves the real point at issue entirely untouched. As I have above ob-

served, the ground taken by this eminent writer is, that the moral teaching which these Gospels attribute to Jesus is so elevated above the conceptions of his followers that it was absolutely above their powers to have invented it. This position I cordially accept. It is founded on the general principle that a man cannot, by any effort of his own, raise himself more than a few degrees above that moral and spiritual atmosphere in which he is born and educated. But this being so, the following question urgently demands an answer: If Jesus was a mere man like ourselves, how became he capable of attaining an elevation high above the surroundings of his birth and education? The reader will perceive that the position taken by Mr. Mill and others does not meet the difficulty, but only removes it one step higher up. Those who propound this theory as an adequate solution of the facts may be justly called upon to answer the question which was asked over eighteen hundred years ago, and which remains unanswered to the present day, except on the assumption of the indwelling in him of the superhuman: Whence got this man all this wisdom?

But I am persuaded that a careful perusal of the Gospels will convince the reader that it is impossible to effect this separation between the moral teaching of our Lord and the supernatural ele-

ments which they contain. I would ask him to observe, in the first place, that considerable portions of the moral teaching directly grow out of the miraculous narrative, and cannot be separated from it without doing violence to the whole. Yet this portion of it is equally elevated with those parts of it which are not so united. But, secondly and chiefly, the far larger proportion of it is permeated by utterances in which our Lord makes claims of so exalted a nature as to be only consistent with the assumption that he was conscious in himself of the presence of the divine. To the general character of these I have already alluded. All that I here wish to observe is, that these utterances as much involve the presence of a superhuman element as those actions which are commonly called "miracles." Yet the whole of this elevated moral teaching of Jesus is interpenetrated with this idea. Throughout the Gospels his utterances are placed by himself on a level with acknowledged oracles from heaven. Yet if all the superhuman elements of the Gospels are ideal, all the utterances which contain these lofty claims, as well as those which grow out of the miraculous narratives, must have been the inventions of the mythologists. From this it follows that these credulous and superstitious followers of Jesus must have been men of a moral ideal elevated high

above the conceptions of their times, otherwise they could not have invented them. But this is not only contrary to the principle on which Mr. Mill's reasoning is based, but is in itself incredible.

I must now ask the reader's attention to a few striking traits in our Lord's moral teaching. Taken as a whole, it possesses that unity of conception which is the acknowledged characteristic of the productions of single minds. It bears none of the marks which a set of aphorisms bear when they have been selected out of a number of other systems and attempted to be woven into a whole. It is admitted to be a moral system of the greatest elevation. It is one which is catholic; i. e., it is one founded on nothing which is merely local or temporary, but is applicable to the whole family of man. It is one in which the principles of casuistry find no place. It comprehends in itself all possible moral obligation, and embraces in its great principles every duty which is due from man to God or from man to man. It is one immensely elevated above the moral and spiritual atmosphere of the times in which it originated, and of the narrow-minded of the particular race in the midst of which it was born. All these are simple facts, and many others might be added.

Now if, in accordance with the general theory

I am controverting, the Gospels chiefly consist of a mass of myths and legends, it follows that those portions of their moral teaching which are closely interwoven with their legendary matter must have been the invention of mythologists, who must have spontaneously elaborated portions of it, which have been woven into a whole by the authors of our present Gospels. Further, numerous as they were, they must not only have been all elevated above the conception of the times in which they lived, but they must have concurred as to the line of moral teaching which was to be attributed to Jesus, and as to what constituted the highest type of morality. If, on the other hand, it is urged that the authors of our Gospels selected those of the current legends which presented an elevated type of morality, and rejected the remainder, then not only would the Gospels bear clear indications of such a selection, but it would still be necessary to attribute the invention of this elevated moral teaching to a number of credulous mythologists. It is scarcely necessary for me to waste the reader's time in proving that the theories above referred to are utterly incredible.

10. The mythologists who invented the ideal matter of which the Gospels are alleged mainly to consist must have been men of either Jewish or Grecian culture. Of these the former must

have been by far the most numerous; and we have abundant testimony how deeply the principles of Judaism were impressed on the Jews of the apostolic age. But according to all the laws which regulate the production of myths and legends, such productions are an embodiment of the feelings and ideas of their inventors; i. e., those invented by Jews would have been an embodiment of Jewish, and those by Greeks of the Grecian type of thought. But, as a matter of fact, the Jesus of the evangelists is neither Jew nor Greek, nor an amalgamation of both, but as broad as humanity itself; i. e., he is a character completely catholic. What follows? If the theories against which I am contending are correct, these credulous mythologists must have concurred, without previous concert, in delineating a number of ideal creations, which, when placed side by side in our Gospels, have formed the great character which is neither Jew nor Greek, but absolutely catholic. The reader will, I think, be of opinion that such a theory is absolutely incredible.

II. The Evolution theory, or the theory of tendencies, has some difficulties which are peculiar to itself, to which I must invite the attention of the reader. Briefly stated, this theory is as follows:

According to it the primitive churches were divided into a number of discordant sects, among whom party spirit raged with violence. These elaborated a set of doctrines and fictitious stories for the purpose of embodying their own particular tendencies. When this sectarian spirit had risen to a dangerous height, it was found desirable to effect compromises between these discordant schools. Of this spirit of compromise St. Luke's Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles are alleged to be striking examples. Both works are said to have been composed for the purpose of mediating between two contending parties, the Petrine and the Pauline, and thereby of aiding in the creation of a common Christianity. For this purpose their author is alleged to have largely modified the materials of which he was in possession, and to have imparted a strong coloring to most of the miracles which are recorded in the latter book, if he did not actually invent them.

In addition to the difficulties with which this theory, in common with those which we have already considered, is encumbered, it contains one remarkable assumption which contradicts all the facts of human nature. It assumes that a number of compromises have been effected in the church, and that catholic Christianity has grown out of them. But what says the voice of history respect-

ing the quarrels of religious creeds? Do they effect compromises? Do they conclude treaties or propound irenicons? Have mediators arisen who have succeeded in forming out of several contending sects a united church? On these points history returns no ambiguous answer. Party spirit in religion, instead of effecting compromises, goes on continually widening. Witness the history of the internal divisions of all the religions in the world. When have a number of contending sects fused into one, and out of the fusion erected a common church? It has passed into a common proverb that nothing is more irreconcilable than religious divisions. Yet without these compromises the theory of tendencies cannot advance a step. It is one, therefore, which, while it may look plausible in the study, is dashed to pieces against the facts of history and the realities of human nature.

It is a matter of indifference with respect to the foregoing arguments whether the materials out of which the evangelists composed our Gospels were oral traditions, or, as some contend, written documents, or were partly written and partly oral. If we adopt the theory that the Synoptic Gospels were composed by the aid of previously existing documents, then it is evident that the character which they delineate must have been

already portrayed in these documents, only with somewhat less of detail. The question therefore still demands an answer, How did it get into these earlier documents? The documents themselves must have been composed from traditions, which, if the Gospels are unhistorical, must have been a set of legendary inventions. It follows, therefore, whether we assume the Gospels to have been composed by the aid of existing documents, or that the evangelists drew directly from tradition, that the portraiture of Jesus must have been formed out of what was once a floating mass of legends; and further, that these legends must have had numerous inventors.

It follows, therefore, whatever alternative we adopt, that the great character delineated in the Gospels must have been the creation of the persons who originally invented the legends of which it is composed, each one having portrayed that portion of it which is contained in the narrative which he invented. The only other possible supposition is that the conception of the character was already so deeply impressed on the minds of the mythologists that the legends which they invented became stamped with its moral impress; but this supposition is inconsistent with the theories which we have been considering, for it presupposes the character already to have been in

existence, and consequently to have been the delineation of a historical reality.

I have assumed throughout this entire argument that the reader of the Gospels instinctively perceives that the delineation of their Christ constitutes a unity of conception. I do not think that this has ever been denied with respect to the Synoptics, except in a very few cases, which are not worthy of notice, against the all but universal consent to the contrary. The objections which have been urged against the character are directed against the perfection of certain aspects of it, such as those which have been urged by Mr. F. Newman and a similar class of objectors. Into their minute and frequently most captious criticisms it is not my purpose to enter; the fact will be sufficient that its greatness is not only unani- mously affirmed by Christians, but freely conceded by the majority of eminent unbelievers. But the case is somewhat different with respect to the fourth Gospel. It has been affirmed that the Jesus of this Gospel differs widely from the Jesus of the Synoptics.

Here I would ask the reader particularly to observe that if all that has been alleged by critical unbelief on this subject were conceded to be correct, the above arguments will remain totally unaffected by this concession. The unity of the

character of the Christ of the Synoptic Gospels is sufficient to sustain their entire weight. Even if the Gospel of St. John were proved to be a forgery, and its portraiture to be that of a different Christ from the Christ of the Synoptics, still it would be impossible to account for the unity of the character of the Synoptic Christ except on the assumption that it is the delineation of a historical reality. The question would still retain all its force, If it is an ideal creation, how did their portraitures get into the Synoptics? The argument is undoubtedly strengthened if the four portraitures are portraitures of one and the same Christ; but it does not depend on this for its validity, nor does the assumption of the unhistorical character of the fourth Gospel get rid of one of the difficulties with which the theories which are propounded by unbelievers are attended. My position, however, is that the four portraitures are portraitures of one and the same Christ, only differing from one another in the point of view at which they have been taken; but I fully admit that the point of view from which the author of the fourth Gospel contemplated the character differs more from that of the Synoptics than any one of the three differs from the others.

The facts stand as follows: While it is unquestionable that the Jesus of the fourth Gospel

habitually makes higher assertions respecting himself than the Jesus of the Synoptics, the Jesus of the Synoptics puts in claims in his various utterances of which the truth of the assertions in the fourth Gospel is the vindication. My meaning will be rendered clear by a few illustrations. In the Sermon on the Mount our Lord claims for his utterances, as legislator of the kingdom of heaven, not only a higher authority than those which Moses uttered in the name of God, but that they are on a level with those uttered by the divine voice at Sinai. In like manner, throughout his entire teaching, he speaks in the highest tones of authority; but the authority is none other than his own. This authoritative form of his utterances, as we are informed by the evangelists, formed a very striking feature in his teaching, and particularly arrested the attention of his hearers. St. Matthew says (7:29): "The multitudes were astonished at his teaching, for he spake as one having authority." He also claims supreme regard and the highest self-sacrifice on the part of his disciples, founded on his own inherent worthiness—a regard so great as to be entitled to supersede the strongest natural ties which unite man to man. Thus he affirms: "He that loveth father and mother more than me is not worthy of me; he that loveth son or

daughter more than me, is not worthy of me; he that taketh not up his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." Matt. 10:36, 37. Again,

"Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. Also I say unto you, whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God; but he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God." Matt. 8:38; Luke 12:8, 9. Again and again he affirms that he it is, and no other, who will determine the final destinies of man, as a righteous judge, in conformity with their conduct here; and in a remarkable parabolic utterance he gives us the delineation of himself as the king thus seated on the throne of his glory with all nations assembled before him. Further, in performing his miracles he uniformly works them in his own name, without referring to any other than himself. Thus a suppliant leper cries, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." "I will," is the reply. "Be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed." Matt. 8:3. Again, to the sick of the palsy, "I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy

bed." Mark 2:11. And in the case of every other miracle he uses similar language. The careful reader of the Synoptics will find numerous instances of these authoritative utterances, which it is unnecessary to particularize.

These and other similar claims which are made by the Jesus of the Synoptics would be the height of presumption if their utterer were a mere man who was devoid of all consciousness of the indwelling of the divine. In fact their arrogance would be so great as to be inconsistent with the presence of holiness, not to say humility, in any purely human character. They are indefinitely higher than those made by the greatest of great men known to history. Neither prophet nor apostle ventures to use such language. Their only vindication is the consciousness on the part of the utterer of the indwelling of the divine.

This being so, the utterances of our Lord in the fourth Gospel, if true, are their ample vindication. The case stands thus:

This Gospel is the complement of the utterances in the Synoptics, and the claims put forth in the Synoptics of the utterances in the fourth Gospel. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," is the utterance of the Christ of St. John. The Synoptic Christ says, "Stretch forth thy hand," and the hand is restored.

But although our Lord's affirmations respecting himself are more lofty than those in the Synoptics, his teaching in both is indelibly impressed with the same moral character; it is in fact the teaching of the same Jesus.

On the other hand, when we compare the two sets of narratives as distinct from the discourses, the two characters which they delineate are identical. It has been alleged that the Johanne Christ is depicted as more divine and less human than the Synoptic Christ. This I deny; and as the point is one of considerable importance, I must afford proof of it. One passage in the Synoptics contains affirmations made by our Lord respecting himself quite as elevated as anything which can be found in the fourth Gospel; in fact, it forms their connecting link. It is as follows:

“At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and none knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke

upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”

Matt. 11:25-30.

It would be difficult to find any utterance of our Lord which is recorded in the fourth Gospel which claims for himself a more superhuman character than the one before us. It affirms that he possesses an exclusive knowledge of the Father, and that none knows him but the Father, or the Father but himself, and that all things are delivered by the Father into his hands; and in virtue of this superhuman character he invites those who labor and are heavy laden to obtain rest in him, affirming that the yoke and the burden which he will impose on them is light; but at the same time they are his yoke and his burden.

But while the fourth Gospel frequently attributes to our Lord the strong dogmatical assertions respecting the dignity of his person which we read in its pages, it delineates the other portions of his character as being equally human as those in the Synoptics. Thus St. John describes him as sitting at Jacob's well, wearied with his journey; the Synoptics on several occasions describe him as retiring to rest himself after his day's labor. In the account of the resurrection of

Lazarus, the fourth Gospel represents him as shedding tears of sympathy, and the whole description, while attributing to him a highly divine character, invests him with a number of characteristics which are preëminently human. Similarly the third Gospel depicts him as shedding tears, and uttering the most pathetic lamentation over Jerusalem and its impending ruin. So again the description of the last supper in the Johanne Gospel delineates him as exhibiting precisely the same aspects of character as in the Synoptics, only in the former its traits are more delicately drawn. Similar also is the narrative of the betrayal, the trial, and the crucifixion. All this is utterly inconsistent with the theory which asserts that the author of this Gospel was so intent on delineating a divine Christ that he has suppressed some of those human aspects of his character which are conspicuous in the Synoptics. In both the identity of character is unmistakable.

This identity will become apparent if we institute a comparison between an entire section in the Synoptics and a corresponding one in the fourth Gospel. As it is the longest and most complete, I will take that which, on the theory that the Gospels are unhistorical, may not inaptly be designated the Drama of the Passion.

It will only be necessary to notice the chief incidents.

The narrative in question begins with the account of the anointing of our Lord at Bethany. It is narrated both by the Synoptics and St. John, but in a different connection. It is remarkable that the latter omits an utterance of our Lord which proves that He accepted the act as having a certain divine significance: "Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this that this woman hath done be told for a memorial of her." Matt. 26:13. But in all other respects the descriptions are precisely alike.

To this follows the account in the fourth Gospel of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, in which all four evangelists represent our Lord as, prior to his great act of self-sacrifice, assuming the character of the King Messiah. Notwithstanding a considerable number of minor variations, the delineations are similar throughout, except that the Synoptics attribute to him the high Messianic act of cleansing the temple, which in this place is omitted by St. John. At this point the narratives diverge, those of the Synoptics representing him as engaged during the days which intervened between his entry and his passion in teaching in the temple and in discussions

with the Jews, while that of St. John records only an interview with some Greeks, in which he is depicted in an aspect preëminently human. On the other hand, the Synoptical delineations depict our Lord during this interval in an attitude preëminently divine. I allude to his great eschatological discourse, which is recorded by all three Synoptics, and the supplemental parable of the last judgment, which is attributed to him by St. Matthew.

This discourse, in conjunction with this parable, contains the greatest and most perfect delineation of our Lord in the divine and human aspects of his character which is to be found in the New Testament, and is certainly not exceeded by anything which is affirmed respecting him in the fourth Gospel. So far the aspect of the Christ of this Gospel is more human than the Christ of the Synoptics.

Next follows the narrative of the last supper. That of John, while differing in numerous points of minor details, which have no bearing on our present argument, from those of the Synoptics, consists of three scenes—the washing of the disciples' feet, the detection and exposure of Judas, and the warning given to Peter. In each of these our Lord is delineated as the perfect combination of dignity with humility and condescending love,

yet in an aspect exquisitely human. No bare description of it will do it justice.

But how stands the case with the Synoptics? It is clear that all four evangelists intended on this occasion to delineate our Lord in his profoundest humiliation; and it is equally certain, notwithstanding their variations, that the conception is identical in all four writers. The last two incidents in the Johannine account form a portion of that of the Synoptics, while the first is omitted; and in St. Luke's Gospel there is inserted in place of it an account of a contest for superiority among the disciples at the very supper-table, and our Lord's rebuke of it. This discourse, however, contains a very remarkable utterance of our Lord (Luke 22:29, 30): "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." It thus combines the highest self-assertion with profound humiliation.

So far the Johannine narrative, as distinguished from the discourses, does not disclose a single trait of a conscious purpose to depict a more divine Christ, or to invest him with less human feelings, than the Christ of the Synoptics.

But how about the long discourse in chapters 14, 15, and 16 of St. John's Gospel, terminated

by the prayer of intercession? Is not this intended to invest our Lord with a halo of glory prior to his passion, and to depict him as preëminently divine? I answer that the divine aspect of his character as set forth in this discourse is not greater than in Matthew 24 and 25, which was uttered less than two days before the one we are now considering, both alike being spoken under the shadow of the cross. In both our Lord is described as investing himself with superhuman greatness immediately before his deepest humiliation, and in both alike he is invested with sympathies preëminently human. So far the Christ of this Gospel is certainly identical with the Christ of the Synoptics.

We now pass on to the scenes of the arrest and trial. Here the details differ considerably, the Johannine narrative passing over in silence the account of the agony in the Garden; yet the same fundamental conception pervades all four narratives, viz., that of our Lord's voluntary self-surrender. This is expressed in the fourth Gospel by the mode in which Jesus is represented as going to meet the band at the entrance of the Garden; in the Synoptics, by the declaration that he had only to pray to his Father, and He would presently send him more than twelve legions of angels. It is simply absurd to affirm that either

incident was invented for the purpose of heightening the effect. Certainly his consciousness, as it is depicted by St. John, is not more divine than as it is depicted by the Synoptics. Both delineations are portraitures of Jesus supported by the consciousness of the indwelling of the divine in the act of voluntarily yielding himself up to death. It is worthy of remark that the Synoptics describe him immediately before his condemnation as making a deliberate assertion of his superhuman character in the presence of the Jewish council, which incident is passed over in silence in the fourth Gospel. The only counterpart to it in this Gospel is our Lord's assertion of his royal dignity before Pilate. Thus each character fits harmoniously into the other.

But what about the omission in this Gospel of the account of the agony in the Garden? Is not the objection which has often been urged true, that its author omitted it of set purpose, fearing that his divine Christ could not endure the weight of so great a humiliation? That such an objection can have been made in the face of the facts above referred to, and numerous others contained in this Gospel, is only one of many proofs that the enunciators of certain theories are ready to accept anything which is in accordance with their pre-conceived opinions on a very slender foundation

of evidence. It is now impossible to determine with absolute certainty what was the reason which induced the author of this Gospel to omit from his account of the passion any reference to the agony in the garden; but nothing can be more certain than that it could not have been that which has been alleged by the school of critics to which I allude; for while he has omitted the account of the agony, he alone of the evangelists gives us an account of another perturbation of our Lord occasioned by the prospect of his sufferings and death, which occurred only two days previously. Both accounts depict him in aspects equally human. It will be necessary to set both before the reader.

The following is the Johannine portraiture :

“ And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. . . . Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. . . . Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this

world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." John 12 : 23-32.

The following is one of the Synoptical delineations of the subsequent agony:

He said unto them, "Sit ye here while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. And he went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words." Matt. 26 : 36-44.

On this follows the narrative of his voluntary surrender into the hands of his enemies.

The reader will observe that the sentiment expressed in both passages is identical, viz., that Jesus was perturbed at the contemplation of his sufferings now just impending over him, that he uttered a prayer for deliverance from them, and that after the prayer perfect calmness returned and the full purpose of submission to the divine will. So far the Synoptic narrative of the Agony differs from the perturbation described by St. John only in the threefold repetition of the prayer and in the language in which it is expressed. Both alike are described as having been uttered under the immediate shadow of the cross.

If the fourth Gospel is a forgery, its author must have been an adept at his art, for its delineations are almost perfect of their kind. But the idea that he invented the narrative of the perturbation, and suppressed that of the agony for the purpose of imparting a more divine aspect to his Master's character, is only consistent with his having been little better than a bungler; for the description of the Synoptics is the grander of the two, and the submission of the will of the sufferer to that of the Father is absolute and complete. The struggle and final submission, as it is depicted in the Synoptics, is Godlike and, at the same time, intensely human, and is strictly in conformity with the character of the Johannine Christ.

The narrative of the condemnation and of the crucifixion calls for little remark. Here again the incidents are extremely varied; but this only imparts a greater force to my argument: for not a single circumstance affects the identity of the character. It is impossible to affirm that the author of the fourth Gospel has imparted a more divine or a less human character to our Lord, either before Pilate or on the cross, than is attributed to him by the Synoptics. If he has omitted the cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" which is attributed to him by the latter, he has inserted that of "I thirst," which they pass over in silence. Surely this is as truly human as the former. Again, if he has attributed to him, just prior to his death, the triumphant cry, "It is finished," we know from the Synoptics that he uttered some cry which infused awe into the mind of the centurion, and the exclamation itself has its complete counterpart in St. Luke's Gospel, in his answer to the prayer of the repentant robber that he would remember him when he came into his kingdom: "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

From these considerations the following conclusion is a necessary consequence. The Johanne Christ and the Synoptic Christ are portrai-

tures of the same character, only varying from each other in the points of view from which their authors contemplated them; and the more numerous the variations are in the details, the stronger is the evidence which they afford of identity; for if there had been any conscious purpose of imparting a more divine character to his Christ than the reality in the author of the fourth Gospel, it would have certainly manifested itself in these variations. The portraiture of the Jesus of the evangelists, therefore, not only forms a harmonious unity of character throughout, but the assertion that the Johannine Christ differs in point of character from the Christ of the Synoptics is utterly unfounded. Our position, therefore, is a most favorable one. We have not one only, but four portraitures of our Lord, no two of which are identical, thus proving the independence of the delineators; but all four possessing that essential unity of conception which is the characteristic of historical reality, but which is unattainable in the ideal inventions of multitudes of mythologists.

In conclusion, there are only two possible alternatives: the portraiture of the Christ of the Gospels is either the delineation of a historical reality, or it is an ideal creation. The first of these alternatives satisfies all the historical conditions of the case; the second, none. Nay, more,

as I have proved above, it involves a mass of hopeless contradictions and absurdities, in the possibility of which reason refuses to believe. It follows, therefore, that the portraiture of the Christ of the Gospels is the delineation of a historical reality. This being so, Christianity carries with it all the consequences of being a divine revelation. These consequences I will sum up in our Lord's own words:

“Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that beholdeth me beholdeth him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me may not abide in darkness. And if any man hear my sayings, and keep them not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I spake not from myself; but the Father which sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life eternal: the things therefore which I speak, even as the Father hath said unto me, so I speak.” John 12:44-50, Revised Version.

Let us therefore accept his gracious invita-

tion: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30); and his declaration that his person is the revelation of the Father.

THE AUTHENTICITY
OF
THE FOUR GOSPELS.

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ARGUMENT OF THE TRACT.

THE evidence furnished by the opening passage of the Acts of the Apostles to the authorship of the third Gospel, the internal evidence of the Acts to the personality of the author, and the various circumstances which identify him as St. Luke are pointed out. The medical language which permeates both the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles is shown to confirm this conclusion. The admissions of M. Renan with reference to St. Luke's authorship of the books are adduced, and the value of them as embodying the conclusions of a hostile witness is indicated. St. Luke is shown to have had ample opportunities of instituting inquiries into the truth of the facts which he records, and a comparison between him and Tacitus as historians in this respect is instituted. The establishment of the authenticity of St. Luke's writings is shown to obviate practically the objections to the other three Gospels. Those Gospels are proved, however, to rest on sufficient evidence. The value of M. Renan's conclusions as invalidating the force of the objections of skeptical criticism is pointed out, and the admissions of distinguished negative critics are quoted with reference to their fundamental objection to the authenticity of the Gospels, namely, the fact that the writers record supernatural events.

THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE FOUR GOSPELS.

THIS is a question which, during the present century, has been discussed with the most intense eagerness. Perhaps there is no other on which such an amount of critical labor has been bestowed, or which in its various aspects has occasioned so much excitement. The controversy began at the latter part of the last century; it was brought to a crisis, which aroused anxiety throughout Europe, by the publication in the year 1835 of Strauss' "Life of Jesus." His criticism was succeeded by that of the Tübingen school, founded by Baur. The challenges thus offered to the faith of the Church were met by numerous and able theologians both in Germany and in this country; and every point in the argument has been contested with the utmost keenness. The prolonged and vehement character of this contest

is certainly not disproportioned to its importance. Nothing can be of more consequence to Christians than to know whether they have good reason for their belief that in the four Gospels they possess four faithful records of the life, the teaching, the death, and the resurrection of their Lord and Master. We are by no means, indeed, entirely dependent on those records for the grounds of our faith, since the Epistles of St. Paul, even if they stood alone, would afford strong testimony to the main facts respecting our Lord which are asserted in the Christian Creed. But the Gospels alone afford us full information respecting our Lord's character and work; and they must ever be regarded as the most precious and important of testimonies to His claims.

It is this, indeed, which has led the skeptics and unbelievers of this century to direct such persistent and fierce attacks upon the Gospels. It has been felt that if they are trustworthy records of what our Lord said and did, the chief positions for which skeptics have contended are at once overthrown. Christ himself bears witness in those Gospels to his own claims, to his supernatural powers, to all that Christians believe respecting him. In fact, all cardinal questions of religion are practically answered if the Gospels can be trusted. Our Lord there bears overwhelming tes-

timony to the existence and character of God, to the fact that we are now under God's government, and shall hereafter be judged by him, and to the truth that he himself can alone save us from our sins and their consequences. Accordingly, the simple facts of the Gospel history were from the earliest moment the sum and substance of the apostles' preaching. In the tenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles we have a record of St. Peter's first address to a Gentile audience, and it is like a brief summary of one of our Gospels. He tells Cornelius "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him . . . whom they slew and hanged on a tree; him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; . . . and he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." Such has ever been in substance the message of the gospel. The chief question which has exercised the minds of men in our own time is whether the four records we possess of that gospel can be relied upon.

Now if we wish to know whether any narra-

tive or statement which we cannot ourselves verify is true, the first question to be asked is, On whose authority does it rest? Is it reported to us by persons who had the means of knowing the facts, and whose accounts can be trusted? If such accounts were written by contemporaries who either themselves witnessed the events narrated, or who were intimately associated with such eye-witnesses, we have the highest kind of evidence which in historical matters is possible. It will be necessary, of course, to inquire further into the honesty and good judgment of such writers; but the first and most important inquiry must be whether their evidence is that of *contemporaries*. This accordingly is the point which has been chiefly challenged by writers who wish to discredit the trustworthiness of the Gospels; and it is the main question to which we shall address ourselves. By whom were the Gospels written, and when? If there is good reason to believe that they were written by apostles or intimate friends of apostles, the main objections which have been raised to their credibility within this century will at once fall to the ground.

Now, notwithstanding the elaborate character of the controversies which have been raised respecting this question, it will be found that the case can after all be very simply stated. It might

be supposed, from the manner in which the problem is generally discussed by opponents of the Christian faith, that some elaborate and far-fetched argument is necessary in order to vindicate the received belief respecting the Gospels. There could not be a greater misapprehension. It is the case of our opponents that is marked by these characteristics; our own is perfectly straightforward and simple. The four Gospels bear upon their title-pages, as we should now say, the statement that they were written by St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, and St. John. That is the way in which, from the earliest date, the words, "according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, John," were understood. No suspicion can be shown to have been entertained by any writer of the first few centuries that these inscriptions had any other meaning, or that the meaning thus implied was untrue. Now, if in our own day a book appears with a name purporting to be that of the author on the title-page, and not a single doubt is expressed during his own lifetime or the lifetime of any of his friends as to the fact of his having written it, who would doubt that he had done so?

It is not merely with respect to modern books that this principle is acted upon; it is equally adopted with respect to ancient books. The

works of Sophocles or Thucydides bear their names; and as the authorship was never doubted in ancient times we accept it still, unless positive external or internal objections to the contrary can be adduced. But the burden of proof lies on those who urge such objections. If certain books have borne the names of certain authors unquestioned for centuries, we have a right to demand very cogent evidence from those who would have us reject this constant consent. In short, from the first moment they are heard of, these four books were accepted as the work of the writers whose names they bear. The question is not, Why should we believe they were written by those persons? but, Why should we not believe it?

But this is only a preliminary step. The most natural and the fairest course is to inquire, in the first place, what the Gospels say for themselves. It is reasonable to allow a witness to speak for himself before we listen to any evidence in opposition to him. Now it so happens that, although the authors of the four Gospels are singularly reticent respecting themselves, two, at least, of them have incidentally afforded us indications which, in the opinion of all critics, are extremely significant of their individuality and of their positions. This is peculiarly the case in respect to the Gospel of St. Luke; and it will be found the simplest

introduction to this part of our subject, if we begin by considering the books which are attributed to him. For in this case we start with the advantage that we have two books on which to base our judgment, instead of one. The book of the Acts of the Apostles opens by a reference to a former book by the same author, and that reference, combined with internal evidence, leaves no practical doubt that this book was the Gospel according to St. Luke. "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus," says the writer, "of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up." But the Gospel according to St. Luke treats of the subject thus defined, and it is similarly addressed to Theophilus. It is moreover generally recognized, even by some of the chief rationalistic critics to whom reference will subsequently be made, that the two treatises are marked by a singular unity of style, idiom, and thought, that one mind conceived the two books and one hand wrote them. If we can determine who was the author of one of them, we know the author of the other.

Now, the authorship of the Acts of the Apostles is revealed by one of those pieces of incidental evidence which, in a matter of this kind, are sometimes more convincing than direct statements. In the 16th chapter the writer is descri-

bing one of the journeys of St. Paul, and at first he speaks of St. Paul and his companions in the third person. Thus, in the 6th verse, he says, "Now when *they* had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia . . . after *they* were come to Mysia, *they* assayed to go into Bithynia; but the Spirit suffered them not." A vision appeared to Paul in the night, bidding him go over to Macedonia; and here the writer suddenly changes his expression, and begins to speak in the first person. In the 10th verse he proceeds: "And after he had seen the vision, immediately *we* endeavored to go into Macedonia." It is natural to conclude that at this point the writer joined St. Paul's company. He proceeds with him to Philippi; but appears to have remained there when St. Paul passed on to Amphipolis, as he resumes the third person at the commencement of chapter 17. But in the 5th verse of chapter 20, where it is described how St. Paul again passed through Philippi when going through Macedonia on his final journey to Jerusalem, the writer begins again to speak of what "we" did. From that time he speaks as though he were constantly in St. Paul's company. He arrived at Jerusalem with him, and was received with him by St. James (21:17, 18); and when St. Paul's imprisonment at Cæsarea was terminated by his appeal to

Cæsar, the writer accompanies him on his voyage, suffered shipwreck with him, and arrived with him at Rome (28 : 16).

Now, from some references in St. Paul's Epistles, there remains no practical doubt who was the person thus associated with St. Paul. In Col. 4 : 14, St. Paul sends a salutation from "Luke, the beloved physician;" in 2 Tim. 4 : 11, he says, "Only Luke is with me;" and at the end of the letter to Philemon, the salutation of Luke is added, among others, to that of St. Paul. St. Luke, therefore, was an intimate companion of the apostle; and there is no other known companion to whom the circumstances mentioned in the Acts are appropriate. Thus the internal evidence which is furnished by the third Gospel, by the Acts of the Apostles, and by St. Paul's Epistles, is in complete harmony with the tradition that St. Luke was the author of both the Gospel and the Acts. A further piece of very striking internal evidence has been added within the last year. St. Paul speaks of Luke as a physician, and it had already been observed that the descriptions of our Lord's miracles of healing, in the third Gospel, bear traces of the hand and eye of a medical observer. But an Irish scholar, the Rev. Dr. Hobart, published last year a full investigation of what he describes as "The Medical Language of

St. Luke,"* and he points out the following facts: that we find running throughout the third Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles a number of words which were either distinctly medical terms, or commonly employed in medical language; that we find a constant use of the same compounds of simple words which the medical writers employ, and that these are for the most part peculiar to this author, or that he makes more frequent use of them than the other New Testament writers; that he alone uses the special medical terms for the distribution of nourishment, blood, nerves, etc., through the body, as well as the medical terms for "stimulation," and to denote an intermittent or a failing pulse; that there are some words confined to St. Luke and the medical authors in the sense which they bear in his writings; and that the medical style of St. Luke accounts for the very frequent and peculiar use made by him of some words which were habitually employed, and were indeed almost indispensable, in the vocabulary of a physician. This peculiar phraseology, moreover, permeates the entire extent of the third Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles, and thus adds a strong evidence of the integrity of those writings.

* "The Medical Language of St. Luke," by the Rev. W. K. Hobart, LL. D. London, 1882.

Here, then, we have the ancient tradition that St. Luke, the companion of St. Paul, wrote our third Gospel corroborated by various convergent evidences of a very striking character. Now it is only reasonable to ask that before evidence of this consistent nature is rejected, very clear objections to its validity should be established. No doubt the evidence is in the main circumstantial and not demonstrative, and it is conceivable therefore that it might be refuted by counter evidence, or by strong objections based on its internal inconsistency. But it is important to observe that the burden of disproof is on the side of the objector; and he ought to be able to make out at least as clear a case on the other side before we can be asked to abandon conclusions which have such a weight of traditional and circumstantial evidence in their favor. This being premised, we proceed to inquire to what the objections amount.

It fortunately happens that this inquiry may be very briefly satisfied. It would be equally tedious and unsatisfactory to pursue in detail the innumerable doubts which critics have urged on this subject. But if we are able to adduce a practically impartial estimate of the value of all these objections—an estimate not made by a believing theologian, but by a skeptical critic who entirely rejects the main teaching of the Gospels as Chris-

tians believe it—in short, by one who is in every sense of the word an outside observer, we may feel satisfied that we are in possession of a fair measure of the force of the objections. Such an independent witness we can call upon in the person of M. Renan. The general character of his views respecting our Lord is well known. He entirely disbelieves in any miraculous occurrences, and assumes that whatever reports we have of them, in any historic document whatever, must by some means or other be explained away. He is, therefore, for our purposes, of even more value than a strictly impartial witness. He is a hostile witness; he is prejudiced beforehand against the literal trustworthiness of a document which contains accounts of miracles, and it would be an assistance to his argument if it could be shown that such a document was not the work of a person who had had access to contemporary evidence.

What, then, is the testimony of M. Renan? It will be found in the Preface to his “*Vie de Jésus*,” 15th edition, p. 48. The passage substantially corresponds to that portion of our argument which has hitherto occupied our attention. He says:

“It is known that each of the four Gospels bears at its head the name of a personage known either in the apostolic history or in the evangeli-

cal history itself. It is clear that if these titles are correct, these Gospels, without ceasing to be partly legendary, assume a high value, since they enable us to go back to the half-century which followed the life of Jesus, and even, in two cases, to eye-witnesses of his actions.”

The reader will here notice M. Renan’s position. He considers that parts of the Gospels must under any circumstances be regarded as legendary, and therefore, as we have observed, he cannot be prejudiced against criticism which would assign them to authors of a late date. But he proceeds:

“As to Luke, doubt is scarcely possible. The Gospel of St. Luke is a regular composition, founded upon earlier documents. It is the work of an author who chooses, curtails, combines. The author of this Gospel is certainly the same as the author of the Acts of the Apostles. Now the author of the Acts seems to be a companion of St. Paul—a character which accords completely with St. Luke. I know that more than one objection may be opposed to this reasoning; but one thing at all events is beyond doubt, namely, that the author of the third Gospel and of the Acts is a man who belonged to the second apostolic generation; and this suffices for our purpose. The date of this Gospel, moreover, may be determined

with sufficient precision by considerations drawn from the book itself. The twenty-first chapter of St. Luke, which is inseparable from the rest of the work, was certainly written after the siege of Jerusalem, but not long after. We are therefore here on solid ground, for we are dealing with a work proceeding entirely from the same hand and possessing the most complete unity."

Now M. Renan's opinions as to the exact date of St. Luke's Gospel, whether a few years before or a few years after the siege of Jerusalem in A. D. 70, and his prejudice respecting the legendary character of some of the narratives in the Gospel, are clearly separable from his critical judgment as to the person by whom the Acts of the Apostles and the third Gospel were written. If he allows that those two books were written by a companion of St. Paul, who, beyond any reasonable doubt, was St. Luke, we may form our own opinions as to the conclusions to be deduced from this admission. But it may be important to observe that the admission has been supported by M. Renan's further investigations, as expressed in his subsequent volume on "The Apostles." In the Preface to that volume he discusses fully the nature and value of the narrative contained in the Acts of the Apostles, and he pronounces the following decided opinions as to the author-

ship of that book and its connection with the Gospel of St. Luke (p. 10, *sq.*):

“One point which is beyond question is that the Acts are by the same author as the third Gospel, and are a continuation of that Gospel. One need not stop to prove this proposition, which has never been seriously contested. The prefaces at the commencement of each work, the dedication of each to Theophilus, the perfect resemblance of style and of ideas, furnish on this point abundant demonstrations.

“A second proposition, which has not the same certainty, but which may, however, be regarded as extremely probable, is that the author of the Acts is a disciple of Paul, who accompanied him for a considerable part of his travels.”

At a first glance, M. Renan observes, this proposition appears indubitable from the fact that the author, on so many occasions, uses the pronoun “we,” indicating that on those occasions he was one of the apostolic band by whom St. Paul was accompanied. “One may even be astonished that a proposition apparently so evident should have found persons to contest it.” He notices, however, the difficulties which have been raised on the point, and then proceeds as follows (p. 14):

“Must we be checked by these objections? I think not; and I persist in believing that the per-

son who finally prepared the Acts is really the disciple of Paul, who says 'we' in the last chapters. All difficulties, however insoluble they may appear, ought to be, if not dismissed, at least held in suspense, by an argument so decisive as that which results from the use of this word 'we.' "

He then observes that MSS. and tradition combine in assigning the third Gospel to a certain Luke, and that it is scarcely conceivable that a name in other respects obscure should have been attributed to so important a work for any other reason than that it was the name of the real author. Luke, he says, had no place in tradition, in legend, or in history when these two treatises were ascribed to him. M. Renan concludes in the following words: "We think, therefore, that the author of the third Gospel and of the Acts is in all reality Luke, the disciple of Paul."

Now let the import of these expressions of opinion be duly weighed. Of course M. Renan's judgments are not to be regarded as affording in themselves any adequate basis for our acceptance of the authenticity of the chief books of the New Testament. The Acts of the Apostles and the four Gospels bear on their face certain positive claims, on the faith of which they have been accepted in all ages of the church, and they do not appeal, in the first instance, to the authority of

any modern critic. But though M. Renan would be a very unsatisfactory witness to rely upon for the purpose of positive testimony to the Gospels, it will be acknowledged that his estimates of the value of modern critical objections to those sacred books have all the weight of the admissions of a hostile witness. No one doubts his perfect familiarity with the whole range of the criticism represented by such names as Strauss and Baur, and no one questions his disposition to give full weight to every objection which that criticism can urge. Even without assuming that he is prejudiced on either one side or the other, it will be admitted on all hands that he is more favorably disposed than otherwise to such criticism as we have to meet. When, therefore, with this full knowledge of the literature of the subject, such a writer comes to the conclusion that the criticism in question has entirely failed to make good its case on a point like that of the authorship of St. Luke's Gospel, we are at least justified in concluding that critical objections do not possess the weight which unbelievers or skeptics are wont to assign to them. M. Renan, in a word, is no adequate witness to the Gospels; but he is a very significant witness as to the value of modern critical objections to them.

To illustrate our meaning, let us take a defi-

nite example. Less than four years ago the author of the work entitled "Supernatural Religion" published what he described as his "complete edition," which he had carefully revised throughout. This work was received with great acclamation by the chief literary representatives of skeptical opinions, and its statements were widely quoted as embodying the final results of impartial criticism. In its first edition the author had maintained that there was no evidence of our present third Gospel being in existence before the time when Marcion the heretic, who flourished about the year 140, put forth a Gospel to suit his peculiar views. The author of "Supernatural Religion" maintained through several editions that Marcion's Gospel was the original, and that our third Gospel was expanded from it. This view, however, he has been compelled to abandon by the researches of Dr. Sanday; and he now admits "that our third Synoptic existed in Marcion's time;" so that we find evidence of its existence "about the year 140, and it may of course be inferred that it must have been composed at least some time before that date."

This is not the only point, as we shall see, on which this writer had to abandon positions which he had asserted with the utmost assurance. But although thus compelled to surrender an impor-

tant point in his argument, he still asserts (vol. III. p. 39) that "there is no evidence whatever that this Luke had been a travelling companion of Paul, or that he ever wrote a line concerning him or had composed a Gospel." We are further told (p. 50) that "a very large mass of the ablest critics have concluded that the 'WE' sections were not composed by the author of the rest of the Acts . . . and that the general writer of the work, and consequently of the third Gospel, was not Luke at all."

Still more positively it is laid down that "a careful study of the contents of the Acts cannot, we think, leave any doubt that the work could not have been written by any companion or intimate friend of the apostle Paul."

Such language would naturally lead the reader to suppose that there was a substantial agreement of independent critics in favor of these conclusions, and that none but uncritical supporters of "traditional" views adhered to the old beliefs. But we have called a witness whose admissions on this point have an unimpeachable value, to prove that criticism has established no such negative conclusions. In the face of it all, M. Renan "persists in believing" that the Acts were written, in the form we now possess them, by a companion of St. Paul, and that this companion was

no other than St. Luke, who was also the writer of the third Gospel. We are justified, in view of this testimony, in concluding that the critical objections are not only destitute of any such positive, scientific, and convincing character as is sometimes claimed for them, but that such weight as they possess is entirely counterbalanced by other critical considerations. In other words, there is nothing left in respect to the third Gospel to weigh against the positive testimony of all ancient authorities, and that testimony therefore has every claim to be accepted.

We have thus arrived at this conclusion—that the third Gospel was really written, in the form in which we now possess it, by St. Luke, the companion of St. Paul in several of his journeys, and particularly on his last visit to Jerusalem and in his subsequent journey to Rome. Now this one point being established, it will be found that all serious objections to the belief of the Church respecting the authenticity of the other Gospels are practically obviated. For it follows that the claim put forward in the preface to the third Gospel is completely justified. St. Luke was not indeed himself an eye-witness of our Lord's life on earth; but he claims to have had "perfect understanding of all things from the very first," or, as the revisers render the phrase, to have

“traced the course of all things accurately from the very first.” St. Paul, in his intercourse with the apostles, must have been fully informed of the teaching and the acts of our Lord during his ministry, and through St. Paul, St. Luke must have been similarly cognizant of them. But in his visit with St. Paul to Jerusalem, St. Luke himself must have been in communication with other apostles, as well as with many other disciples of our Lord who had “compained with them all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among them.” That visit to Jerusalem was about twenty-five years after the crucifixion, when those who had been the actual contemporaries of our Lord were from fifty to sixty years of age, in full possession of their faculties, with their memory still clear and their judgment vigorous. St. Luke must have had abundant opportunities in such company of following up, as he says he did, everything from the very first. “Many,” he says, had already taken in hand to set forth in order a narrative of the same facts “even as they delivered them unto us which from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word.” These written narratives he was in a position to test, to complete, and to arrange in better order, by personal inquiry of the same or other “eye-witnesses and ministers of the word.”

If, therefore, he was a faithful historian, that which he has recorded for us is the sifted and well-arranged testimony of eye-witnesses: it is the result of a mass of evidence at first hand.

Now we may well ask whether any better ground for our belief than this could well have been afforded us. All the evidence we can obtain, with respect to the great mass of historical events, is the account of them by some historian who lived at or near the time of their occurrence, and who had reports of them either at first or second hand. This, for instance, is the evidence on which we believe the annals of Tacitus. He was born somewhat before the year 60 A. D., and narrates the history of the years from A. D. 14-68, of which the first forty were before he was born. He was not, therefore, a contemporary of the greater part of the events he narrates, while St. Luke was. But like St. Luke, he had opportunities for ascertaining the facts from eye-witnesses, and as his writings produce the impression that he was a truthful person, of sound judgment, we accept his testimony.

But it must be observed that for the greater part of the narratives in Tacitus we have no such guarantee as is afforded us by the facts above established respecting St. Luke. What is the utmost guarantee of truth that we could expect

from any historian? Surely that, being a contemporary of the events he narrates, he should visit the country and the very spots in which they are alleged to have occurred, that he should be acquainted with reports of them already committed to writing, that he should be well acquainted with many persons who actually witnessed them, that he should possess the full confidence of such persons, and that he should take pains to make a thorough inquiry into the facts. Very few historians indeed have had the opportunity of fulfilling these requirements. Tacitus, for instance, had no such opportunities for a great part of the events he narrates. But St. Luke had those opportunities in the fullest degree, and he assures us simply and straightforwardly in the preface to his Gospel that he made a diligent use of them. The result of such considerations is that in St. Luke's Gospel we possess an account of our Lord's birth, ministry, passion, and resurrection which embodies the harmonious evidence of eye-witnesses, and which preserves for us the best contemporary evidence which was attainable.

But it will readily be seen that if the authenticity and credibility of one Gospel is thus clearly established, the inquiry which remains respecting the authenticity and credibility of the other three is immensely simplified. With respect at least to

the first two Gospels there would seem to remain no sufficient reason why any skeptical critic should trouble himself to dispute their authenticity. For it is unquestionable that they tell substantially the same story as is told in the third Gospel. There are indeed some points of detail on which it has been found difficult to harmonize them. It is unnecessary for our present argument to discuss these minor difficulties. They are of importance in respect to the relation of the Gospels to one another, and they have also important bearings upon the question of the character of the inspiration which Christians believe was vouchsafed to the writers. But, at the very utmost, they amount to no more than the discrepancies which, as we are reminded every day by discussions respecting the biographies of men recently deceased, continually arise between the accounts of truthful contemporaries and eye-witnesses. We are not here admitting that such apparent discrepancies in the Gospels are real. We only say that, even if they exist, they are of such a minor character as not to affect materially the substantial harmony of the narratives, or to impair their general trustworthiness. But from this it follows that if any one of the first three Gospels was written by a contemporary, and is a record of contemporary evidence, both the others might be. If criticism can adduce no suf-

ficient reason why the third Gospel should not be, as it purports to be, written by St. Luke, it can hardly be worth its while to expend much subtlety in disputing the tradition that the first Gospel was written by St. Matthew and the second by St. Mark. St. Luke's Gospel, we have seen, is a record of the accounts current among apostles and contemporaries of our Lord respecting his ministry. Consequently it is only to be expected that other records written by members of the same company, at about the same period, should be substantially of the same character. One positive piece of evidence suffices to outweigh any number of mere doubts and objections. In view of what has been said, we are forced to the conclusion that the story told by St. Luke is the story which was harmoniously told by the contemporaries of our Lord in Palestine. If so, there is at least no reason arising out of the story itself why St. Matthew and St. Mark should not have written the two Gospels attributed to them.

But, of course, in the interests of the Christian faith, and for the purposes of Christian instruction, it is of the highest interest and importance to know whether the objections which have been raised against the authenticity of the Gospels attributed to St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. John can be sustained; and with respect to the former

two Gospels this question may be dealt with even more simply and briefly than in the case of St. Luke. Here again it is only reasonable to start from the uniform tradition of the earliest ages on the subject. As is said by Holtzmann,* a rationalistic critic, "the first cononical Gospel was entirely and unanimously attributed by the ancient Church to the apostle Matthew." As the same critic observes, this is the more remarkable, since there is nothing in what is otherwise known of Matthew to account for the first Gospel being attributed to him (p. 360): "That the early Church must have had some ground in facts for referring the first Gospel to this name must seem the more probable, since, with this exception, the person of Matthew is entirely in the background in the history of the apostolic age."

In other words, there was no reason why it should have been believed that St. Matthew wrote the Gospel except that he did write it; and therefore, as has been urged before, the tradition has, on the face of it, a claim to be believed in the absence of evidence to the contrary. But, in the first place, there is positive evidence to the fact that St. Matthew did write a work of the general character of our Gospel. There is one valuable piece of early Christian testimony pre-

* "Die Synoptischen Evangelien," p. 359.

served to us respecting the authorship of the first two Gospels. It is contained in a fragment of a work by Papias, who was bishop of Hierapolis, in Asia Minor, in the first half of the second century, and who was a hearer of the apostle John. It is natural that we should have but little discussion of the authorship of the New Testament writings in early times, if they were really genuine. Christians in such case would accept them without hesitation; and it would be only as time went on, and heresies arose, or the Church came into conflict with heathen culture, that doubts on this subject would be raised. The evidence of Papias is therefore particularly welcome, and it has been scrutinized, by believers and unbelievers alike, with the utmost keenness. With respect to St. Matthew, he is quoted by Eusebius (Hist. Eccl. 3:39) as saying that "Matthew composed the Oracles in the Hebrew tongue, and each one interpreted them as he could." There has been much dispute as to the exact meaning of the term "oracles" here used. Some writers have endeavored to make out that it is only applicable to sayings or discourses, and that consequently the work by St. Matthew which was known to Papias can only have been a collection of our Lord's sayings, and cannot have been a narrative of his ministry, like our present Gospel. Even if this restricted

interpretation of the word could be maintained, it would be evidently pressing the argument too far to assume that such a collection excluded all narratives of facts; but it has been conclusively shown that the word bears no such narrow meaning. It is the same word as is used by St. Paul when he says (Rom. 3:1, 2) that the Jews had the keeping of the oracles of God, by which he evidently means the Old Testament Scriptures as a whole, including the narrative books. At the utmost, the fact that St. Matthew reports with special prominence and fulness several of our Lord's discourses would be sufficient to answer the meaning of such an expression. Thus we have two positive facts from which to start—the one, the fact that our first Gospel was uniformly attributed to St. Matthew from the earliest times; the other, the express statement of a disciple of St. John that St. Matthew wrote a work of this kind. Whether St. Matthew, besides writing the original Gospel in Hebrew, subsequently translated it himself into Greek, or whether our present Gospel is another work of the same kind which the apostle also wrote, are secondary points. From these two facts it is reasonable to accept our first Gospel as St. Matthew's work, in the absence of decisive critical objections. Before considering the value of such objections, we will next inquire

what positive evidence we have respecting the Gospel of St. Mark.

Here again there is absolute unanimity in the belief of the earliest times. No doubt was expressed for long centuries as to the truth of the title which attributed the second Gospel to *St. Mark*. This person is generally acknowledged to be the same as the "John, whose surname was Mark," mentioned several times in the Acts of the Apostles as well as in the Epistles of St. Paul and St. Peter. He was the cousin of Barnabas, and is called by St. Peter (1 Pet. 5:13), "My son," perhaps as having been converted by him. His mother was the Mary in whose house in Jerusalem the Christians are described as meeting in the earliest days after the foundation of the Church. Acts 12:12. He accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey; and though there was a temporary separation between him and St. Paul, he is afterwards mentioned by that apostle as one of his most valued attendants. At another time, as we have seen, he was with St. Peter, and Papias tells us that he acted as St. Peter's interpreter. He was, therefore, at least as much as St. Luke, in a position to ascertain the truth respecting our Lord's ministry. In his case also the tradition of antiquity is supported by the evidence of Papias. That wri-

ter related that "the elder," who was either St. John the apostle or a presbyter contemporary with the apostle, gave him the following account:

"Mark, having become interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately everything that he remembered, without however recording in order what was either said or done by Christ. For neither did he hear the Lord, nor did he follow him; but afterwards, as I said, [attended] Peter, who adapted his instructions to the needs [of his hearers], but had no design of giving a connected account of the Lord's oracles [or discourses]. So, then, Mark made no mistake while he thus wrote down some things as he remembered them, for he made it his one care not to omit anything that he heard, or to set down any false statement therein."*

Now if these statements of Papias apply to our present Gospels, they furnish invaluable evidence as to their early date and as to their authorship. Once more we will ask M. Renan to tell us how far in his opinion the criticism by which this applicability is disputed has made out its case. In his Preface to his "Life of Jesus" (p. 51), after reciting the testimony of Papias, he says, "It is certain that these two descriptions

* We have availed ourselves of Bishop Lightfoot's translations, given in his article on "Papias," in the "Contemporary Review" for August, 1875.

correspond well enough to the general physiognomy of the two books now called 'The Gospel according to Matthew' and 'The Gospel according to Mark'—the first being characterized by its long discourses, the second being specially anecdotic, much more exact than the first in the details, brief to the extent of dryness, poor in discourses, and but ill put together."

This surely is sufficient for practical purposes; and, considering the slightness of the account of Papias, such a general correspondence as is here admitted would seem as much as could be required. M. Renan, however, goes on to lay upon Papias' words that undue stress already noticed, and to argue that the work of St. Matthew which Papias had before him can only have contained discourses, and that therefore subsequent additions must have been made to it, out of which our present Gospel has arisen; while, on the other hand, additions have been made to the original St. Mark in order to supply its omissions and to make it more like St. Matthew's work. Of any such revision of the original forms of these two Gospels there is not a single trace of external evidence, nor does M. Renan pretend to produce any; and the best means of estimating the weight to be attached to such a suggestion is afforded by further conclusions expressed by himself. As the

result of his inquiries into the value of the four Gospels he expresses himself as follows:

“To sum up, I admit the four canonical Gospels as serious documents. All go back to the age which followed the death of Jesus. But their historical value is very diverse. St. Matthew evidently deserves peculiar confidence for the discourses. Here are ‘the oracles,’ the very notes taken while the memory of the instruction of Jesus was living and definite. A kind of flashing brightness, at once sweet and terrible, a divine force, if I may so say, underlines these words, detaches them from the context, and renders them easily recognizable by the critic” (p. 81).

Now we ask with what reason it can be maintained that a Gospel like that of St. Matthew deserves “peculiar confidence” in its most characteristic and most vital elements, but that this confidence is at once to be withdrawn from it whenever a critic like M. Renan fails to appreciate the importance or the vividness of its observations. If a witness comes into court and is found to be absolutely trustworthy in a vital and characteristic portion of his evidence, would it be deemed reasonable to say that he is not to be believed in the other part of his evidence because you do not like it or do not understand it? Let us take a particular instance. That from which

M. Renan and all skeptical critics shrink in the Gospel narratives is, as we shall have further occasion to observe, their miraculous element. Now the eighth and ninth chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel contain a record of ten of our Lord's miracles, and these are one-half of the whole number recorded by that evangelist. But this record of all these works of supernatural power and mercy immediately follows the Sermon on the Mount. In the three chapters preceding this miraculous record St. Matthew has preserved to us, with a vividness and force of which the most skeptical are sensible, a long discourse by our Lord of the most momentous import, which is universally felt to embody some of his most characteristic teaching. Now is it not a strange paradox to suppose that in a record which is marked, as almost all admit, by a substantial unity of design, we should pass immediately from such teaching as that of the Sermon on the Mount to a similarly long narrative of wholly untrustworthy reminiscences? In the one passage we are surrounded with a blaze of moral and spiritual light piercing to the very thoughts and intents of the heart, burning up all falsehood in word or deed, all hypocrisy and unreality; and in the next passage we are asked to believe that we find ourselves in an atmosphere of illusion, credulity, and uncertainty. Such a

transition from absolute light—light undimmed, unobscured by a single shadow, unperverted by a single false color—may well be regarded as inconceivable. But it is the same throughout the Gospels. Many of our Lord's most precious sayings are inseparably bound up with his miracles, arise out of them, and point their lessons. The two are indissolubly united; and the Sermon on the Mount is thus itself the best guarantee for the miraculous narratives which immediately follow.

In short, when M. Renan allows that Papias' language corresponds "very fairly" (*assez bien*) to our present Gospel of St. Matthew, and that the discourses, at all events, in that Gospel deserve "peculiar confidence," he at any rate justifies us in concluding that criticism can make out no such case against the authenticity and credibility of the book as deserves to be put in the balance against the unanimous external evidence in its favor. But with respect to the Gospel of St. Mark his admissions are even more striking and decisive.

"The Gospel of St. Mark," he says, p. 82, "is the one of the first three which has remained the most ancient, the most original, and to which the least of later additions have been made. The details of fact possess in St. Mark a definiteness which we seek in vain in the other evangelists.

He is fond of reporting certain sayings of our Lord in Syro-Chaldaic. He is full of minute observations, proceeding, beyond doubt, from an eye-witness. There is nothing to conflict with the supposition that this eye-witness, who had evidently followed Jesus, who had loved him and watched him in close intimacy, and who had preserved a vivid image of him, was the apostle Peter himself, as Papias has it."

What is this but to say that criticism has failed to establish any valid objections against the traditional belief of the Church that the Gospel of St. Mark is the book of which Papias spoke as having been written by St. Mark from the narratives of St. Peter, and that it contains the very reminiscences of that apostle?

Let us then consider what is the general result of this review of the evidence for our first three Gospels, and of the validity of modern critical objections, as estimated by the most famous skeptical critic of our generation. M. Renan, with all these objections before him, being as well qualified by his learning as any scholar, whether in this country or abroad, to judge of such criticism, and being necessarily predisposed by his disbelief of Christian truths in favor of objections against the credibility of the sacred writings, nevertheless finds himself obliged to come to the conclusion

that the old traditions respecting the first three Gospels are at least substantially true. He admits that all four Gospels were written in the age following the death of our Lord, and therefore while many of His contemporaries were living; he admits that the third Gospel, and also the Acts of the Apostles, were written in their present form by St. Luke, who was St. Paul's intimate companion, and who visited Jerusalem with him; he admits that the discourses of our Lord, at all events in the first Gospel, were recorded by St. Matthew, one of the twelve apostles, and that they deserve to be accepted with peculiar confidence; and he further admits that the second Gospel was in substance written by St. Mark, that it is the most original in its present form of the three, that it bears numerous marks of the reminiscences of an eye-witness, and that there is nothing to lead us to doubt the ancient tradition that this eye-witness was St. Peter himself.

In short, this is the result of modern criticism as represented by M. Renan: that in St. Matthew we have our Lord's teaching recorded by an apostle himself; in St. Mark we have the vivid reminiscences of another apostle, who was one of the three most intimate with our Lord; and that in St. Luke we have the mature and deliberate record of a cultivated writer, who, being a physi-

cian, was also trained in habits of observation, after a careful inquiry from contemporaries, amid the very scenes where the events he records were transacted. We repeat that we do not rest these facts respecting the first three Gospels on M. Renan's investigations. They stand, in the first instance, on the direct evidence of historic tradition, by which the authorship of all other books is determined. But we appeal to M. Renan as affording abundant proof that modern criticism has produced no argument sufficient to counterbalance, or even seriously to affect this evidence.

We now turn to the Gospel of St. John; and, vehement as has been the controversy on this subject, the case in favor of its authenticity admits of being more simply and decisively stated than even the case of the first three Gospels. In the first place, the primary evidence to its authorship is peculiarly definite and direct. Irenæus, who became Bishop of Lyons about 177 A. D., was a pupil of a famous disciple of St. John, Polycarp, who died as a martyr in the year 155 or 156. Irenæus tells us, in a letter of remonstrance he wrote to a fellow-pupil, Florinus, who had lapsed into heresy, how vividly he remembered Polycarp's instructions and conversation:

“I distinctly remember,” he says, “the inci-

dents of that time better than events of recent occurrence; for the lessons received in childhood, growing with the growth of the soul, become identified with it; so that I can describe the very place in which the blessed Polycarp used to sit when he discoursed, and his goings out and his comings in, and his manner of life, and his personal appearance, and the discourses which he held before the people, and how he would describe his intercourse with John and with the rest who had seen the Lord, and how he would relate their words. And whatsoever things he had heard from them about the Lord, and about his miracles, and about his teaching, Polycarp, as having received them from eye-witnesses of the life of the Word, would relate altogether in accordance with the Scriptures." (Euseb. Hist. Eccl., V. 20.)

In order to appreciate what this involves, we must ask what Irenæus meant by the "Scriptures." Of course the expression must refer to those portions of the Scriptures which narrate the life of our Lord, and Irenæus has stated in a memorable passage what these records were. In the third book of his great work on "The Refutation and Overthrow of Knowledge falsely so called," he relates briefly, says Bishop Lightfoot,*

* "Contemporary Review" for August, 1876, p. 413.

“the circumstances under which the four Gospels were written. He points out that the writings of the evangelists arose directly from the oral gospel of the apostles. He shows that the traditional teaching of the apostles has been preserved by a direct succession of elders, which in the principal churches can be traced man by man, and he asserts that this teaching accords entirely with the evangelical and apostolical writings. He maintains, on the other hand, that the doctrine of the heretics was of comparatively recent growth. He assumes throughout, not only that our four canonical Gospels alone were acknowledged in the church in his own time, but that this had been so from the beginning. His antagonists indeed accepted these same Gospels, paying especial deference to the fourth evangelist; accordingly he argues with them on this basis. But they also superadded other writings, to which they appealed, while heretics of a different type, as Marcion for instance, adopted some one Gospel to the exclusion of all others. He therefore urges not only that four Gospels alone have been handed down from the beginning, but that in the nature of things there could not be more nor less than four. There are four regions of the world, and four principal winds; and the church therefore, as destined to be conterminous

with the world, must be supported by four Gospels as four pillars. The Word again is represented as seated on the cherubim, who are described by Ezekeiel as four living creatures, each different from the other. These symbolize the four evangelists with their several characteristics. The predominance of the number four again appears in another way. There are four general covenants—of Noah, of Abraham, of Moses, of Christ. It is therefore an act of audacious folly to increase or diminish the number of the Gospels. As there is fitness and order in all the other works of God, so also we may expect to find it in the case of the gospel.”

The passage thus summarized by the present learned Bishop of Durham is to be found in the first eleven chapters of the third book of the work of Irenæus just mentioned, and its immense significance for the purpose of our argument will readily be perceived. The four Gospels we now possess constituted, in the view of Irenæus, an essential part of “the Scriptures.” The reasons he gives for the necessity of their being four in number may be fanciful, but they are adduced in order to explain what he represents as a fact. He appeals, however, to Polycarp’s authority, and his view therefore respecting the four Gospels must be in harmony with what he had learned at

Polycarp's feet. The conclusion, therefore, cannot fairly be avoided that Polycarp himself, St. John's own disciple, knew and recognized all four Gospels, not only those of St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke, but that which was attributed to his own master, St. John. When Irenæus tells us that Polycarp used to describe "his intercourse with John and with the rest who had seen the Lord," and that "whatsoever things he had heard from them about the Lord and about his miracles and about his teaching" he would relate "altogether in accordance with the Scriptures," he tells us nothing else than that what Polycarp had heard from John and from the rest who had seen the Lord was in complete agreement with our present Gospels of St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, and St. John. That Irenæus used precisely the same Gospels as are now in our possession is disputed by no one; and these very books he says are in full agreement with what he heard from Polycarp and Polycarp heard from St. John.

Now this testimony to the first three Gospels is of immense weight, for it gives at all events the sanction of Polycarp, and goes far to give the sanction and recognition of St. John himself to those three books. But with respect to the Gospel of St. John it would seem overwhelming. The one point upon which Polycarp was special-

ly qualified to bear testimony to Irenæus, and on which he did bear testimony, was the teaching of St. John, and that apostle's account of our Lord's words and works. If, then, St. John was not the author of the fourth Gospel, is it conceivable that Irenæus should not only have been ignorant of the fact, but that he should have treated that Gospel as part of "the Scriptures," and have declared that it was in entire conformity with what he had heard from his aged master? If the Gospel was by St. John, it must have been written before the year 100, and it must have been in circulation in Asia Minor at the time when Irenæus was a disciple of Polycarp. The book must have been in their hands, and Polycarp certainly must have known whether or not it was the work of his own master. We have, therefore, the declared and solemn evidence of a man whom we may call the spiritual and literary grandchild of St. John, with the implied evidence of St. John's own child in the faith, to the fact that that apostle was the author of the fourth Gospel. We have only to add that in early times no doubt respecting St. John's authorship is expressed by any writer likely to be acquainted with the facts; and it may be confidently asked whether more direct and positive testimony to the authorship of an ancient work could be obtained or desired?

It would need an enormous preponderance of critical difficulties to justify the rejection of such evidence. We are asked to doubt the very eyes and ears, the very mind and heart, of two of the best witnesses in all Christian antiquity; and what are the objections on the strength of which this demand is made upon us? We take M. Renan once more as a fair exponent of the force which these critical objections possess, and we are content to ask him to what they amount. The result will be scarcely credible to many readers; but they may easily verify for themselves what we say. He practically confesses that every objection is insufficient except one; and what is that? Simply that in M. Renan's opinion the discourses of our Lord recorded by St. John are "pretentious tirades, heavy, badly written, making but little appeal to the moral sense." (Introduction to "Vie de Jésus," page 69.)

This extraordinary opinion, which will need no refutation for most English readers, remains M. Renan's sole substantial ground for rejecting St. John's authorship. At the end of a long appendix he concludes that there are only two alternatives: "Either the author of the fourth Gospel was a disciple of Jesus, an intimate disciple, and from the most early period; or else the author, for the purpose of giving himself authority, has em-

ployed an artifice which he has maintained from the beginning of the book to the end, with the view of making it believed that he was a witness in as good a position as possible for narrating the truth of the facts." (Page 537, 15th edition.) In other words, as M. Renan goes on to admit, the author is either St. John or he is a liar. "There is no question here of legends, the creation of the multitude, for which no person in particular is responsible. A man who, to procure credence to what he narrates, deceives the public not only respecting his name, but still more with respect to the value of his testimony, is not a writer of legends, he is a forger." (Page 538.) M. Renan fully admits the difficulty of such an alternative, and confesses as the result of all this discussion that "at a first glance it seems that the most natural hypothesis is to admit that all these writings—the Gospel and the three Epistles—are really the work of John, the son of Zebedee." Why does not he accept this "natural hypothesis"? He mentions, first, one or two objections which are of no real weight, and which have been given up by other rationalistic writers—such as that the Greek in which the fourth Gospel is written is very different from the Palestinian Greek of the other books of the New Testament. But this, as has been often observed, is a strong

argument in favor of St. John's authorship; for if he lived for thirty years, from A. D. 70-100, in so thoroughly Greek a city as Ephesus, he would be likely to acquire a purer Greek style than any of his fellow-apostles. M. Renan falls back, as his main objection, on his dislike to the discourses in the fourth Gospel. "The ideas, above all, are of an order entirely different from those in the other books of the New Testament. We are here in full Philonian and almost Gnostic metaphysic. The discourses of Jesus as reported by this pretended witness, this intimate disciple, are false, often insipid, and impossible." That is all. As to the general character of the narrative in itself, it is all in favor of St. John's authorship: "Considered in itself, the narrative of the material circumstances of the life of our Lord, as furnished by the fourth evangelist, is superior in point of verisimilitude to the narrative of the other three Gospels" (p. 536).

M. Renan notices elsewhere the little traits of precision in the story: "It was the sixth hour;" "it was night;" "the servant's name was Malchus;" "they had made a fire of coals, for it was cold;" "the coat was without seam;" and he speaks of characteristics which are "inexplicable on the supposition that our Gospel was nothing more than a theological thesis without historical

value, but which are intelligible if we see in them the reminiscences of an old man" (p. 68). There is, in a word, a mass of internal as well as external evidence in support of the belief of Irenæus and Polycarp on this subject; but it is all to be thrown aside simply because M. Renan cannot endure the exquisite discourses which the fourth Gospel records!

Such is the weakness of the objections which criticism is able to adduce against the genuineness of the Gospel of St. John, according to the testimony of the most famous skeptic of modern times. The truth is that, as was stated last year by Dr. Bernhard Weiss, one of the most learned scholars of Germany, the disciples of Baur, the founder of the Tübingen school, have been compelled, "step by step, to concede one after another of the testimonies against which he contended. Every new discovery since his time . . . has positively refuted contentions of criticism which had long been obstinately maintained." ("Leben Jesu," I. 92.)

One of these recent discoveries is perhaps worth mention. Tatian, the disciple of Justin Martyr, was said by tradition to have prepared a harmony of our four Gospels, called the Diatessaron. Of course, if he did, the four Gospels must have been of recognized authority in his own

time and in that of his master, a consideration which alone would take us back to the first half of the second century. Accordingly, writers like the author of "Supernatural Religion" were at great pains to maintain that there was no sufficient evidence of Tatian having written any such harmony at all; and more than this, that "it is obvious there is no evidence of any value connecting Tatian's gospel with those in our canon" (vol. II. p. 157, 1879).

At the very time these words were published, only four years ago, a work by an eminent Christian father had been recovered which is regarded by the general assent of German scholars as a commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron; and hence even skeptical critics now generally admit that Tatian did weave into one harmony the very four Gospels which we now possess. In short, as M. Renan is acute enough to perceive and candid enough to admit, all the external critical objections against the authenticity of our four Gospels have successively broken down more or less fatally; and there remains no other objection to be made to them than that some critics cannot understand or account for them.

Some readers may, perhaps, be disposed to think that the last sentence involves a rather harsh judgment, and it is a statement we should

not make unless, as we shall observe in conclusion, it were made by the critics themselves. It would be natural to ask, at the close of such an inquiry as this, how it is that if the critical objections against the Gospels are so baseless, they should have been maintained with such persistency by scholars so learned and so earnest as those who have been the leaders of the negative schools in Germany for the last fifty years. It is only to be explained on one supposition, and that is that they started with a prejudice against the truth of the Gospel narratives, and they were concerned at almost any cost to justify their disbelief. Again we say that this is a charge we should not have ventured to advance except on their own confession and avowal; but as the avowal has been made by them, again and again, it is equally necessary and just that they should be held to the consequences of it.

It will be sufficient on this point to quote the testimony of Dr. Karl Hase, one of the most venerable scholars of Germany, whose "Life of Jesus," published more than fifty years ago, was the first work of the kind, who represents on the whole a decidedly rationalistic view, and who has lately reviewed the whole course of the controversy in his "History of Jesus," published in 1876. He there (p. 124) says that the novelty of

the mode of treatment adopted by himself and by Strauss and his successors was that the chief writers of this school labored in all earnestness, and with all the resources of science, "to represent a purely human life, founded on purely human writings." That is, they started from the supposition that our Lord's life was purely human, and therefore could have had nothing miraculous about it. Their avowed object therefore was, by some means or other, to explain away the miraculous narratives contained in the Gospels. Strauss expressed this prejudice in the plainest language by saying that "that which could not have happened did not happen;" and consequently the problem for the critic was to explain how four writers like the authors of our Gospels came to say with such circumstantiality that things which could not have happened did happen. His explanation was that the stories of the Gospels grew up as myths, embodying certain religious and political ideas which were then afloat. That explanation was given up as inadequate, even by his immediate successor, Baur. But Baur started from the same prejudice, and set himself a similar task. The theory which he and his followers maintained was that the Gospels were very late productions, which had been written with the specific "tendency" or purpose of maintaining

special views—Petrine, Pauline, or Johannine—of the principles of Christianity. They invented ingenious combinations for this purpose; but as Dr. Hase, who admires them though he differs from them, observes, “the uncertainty of a negative result was exhibited in this case also; and for Baur also the decisive reason is the marvelous and impossible character of the contents of the Gospels” (p. 143). So Baur himself said (“Canon. Gospels,” p. 530) that “the capital argument for the later origin of our Gospels remains always this—that each of them for itself, and still more all of them together, represent so much in the life of Jesus in a manner in which in reality it never could have happened.” Thus, says Dr. Hase, “The criticism of the Gospels comes back to the criticism of Gospel history; . . . and the question arises whether the Gospels do really relate what is impossible.”

Dr. Hase thinks that the sacred narratives can after all be explained away into something natural and ordinary, only magnified by excited imaginations; and something of the same kind is M. Renan’s view, although the explanations of these two writers differ very widely. But M. Renan also bases the whole of his argument on the supposition that miracles are impossible.

“If,” he says, in the Preface to his thirteenth

edition (p. 9.), "miracles and the inspiration of certain books are realities, my method is detestable. If miracles and the inspiration of books are beliefs without reality, my method is a good one. But the question of the supernatural is decided for us with perfect certainty by the single consideration that there is no room for believing in a thing of which the world offers no experimental trace."

Accordingly M. Renan, in his turn, must find some means of explaining away the Gospels. But as we have seen, he is compelled to admit that all attempts to trace their authorship to a later age than that of the apostles, or in the main to other hands than those of their traditional authors, has failed; and so he endeavors to explain them as a kind of romance.

In view of these facts it will now be seen that the difficulties connected with the history of the four Gospels have never, at any time, been based upon candid and unprejudiced criticism. They have been raised in the interest of a criticism which started with foregone conclusions, and their authors have been driven back from post to post, and have had to take refuge in one arbitrary theory after another. The "natural hypothesis" has always been what M. Renan declares it is now in respect to the fourth Gospel, namely,

that St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, and St. John were the real authors of the four books which bear their names, and that they are faithful witnesses to what actually occurred. It is remarkable that if we put out of sight the hypothesis of Baur, now confessedly exploded—that the four Gospels were of late origin, and written with a controversial purpose—no serious critic impugns the good faith of the writers. The only possible objection which remains is that all four writers were utterly deluded as to what they “saw and heard and handled.” Other tracts of this series have dealt and will deal with that extravagant supposition. Our concern has simply been to show that we possess in the four Gospels contemporary records by competent witnesses, and that criticism has been unable to establish any serious objection against this belief.

THE
HISTORICAL EVIDENCE
OF THE
RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST
FROM THE DEAD.

BY

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THE ARGUMENT IN BRIEF.



FOUR Epistles of the apostle Paul—Galatians, Romans, Corinthians I. and II.—are universally admitted by learned unbelievers to be genuine, and to have been written within thirty years after the Crucifixion.

Taking these Epistle alone, the writer shows the impossibility of a belief in the Resurrection having arisen, spread everywhere, been accepted without doubt, and becoming the foundation of the Christian church, on any other hypothesis than the reality of the fact.

THE HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

OF THE

Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead.



THE ARGUMENT STATED.

THE writers of the New Testament have staked the truth of Christianity on the actual performance of a single miracle—the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If, therefore, this cannot be proved to be an historical fact, it is a mere waste of time and trouble either to attack any other of the miracles of the Bible, or to attempt to prove their truth. If Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead, all the other miracles which are recorded in the New Testament would not avail to prove that Christianity is a divine revelation. If he did, this one alone proves it, and is capable of supporting the weight of all the rest. As therefore this miracle constitutes the key of the Christian position, we challenge unbelievers to join issue on its truth;

and invite believers not to allow their attention to be distracted to points of controversy where the evidence is weaker, and which after all do not involve the real point at issue.

I shall treat this subject precisely as I would any point of secular history. I shall not require the reader to believe that the New Testament is inspired. I shall use the Gospels as I would any other memoirs. I shall claim no other authority for the letters of St. Paul than I would for the letters of Cicero. The reader, on his part, must not object that miracles are impossible; for whether they are so or not is a philosophical question which lies *outside the regions of historical inquiry*: and to assume that they are so is simply to beg the question which we are professing to discuss. In this tract I can only deal with historical evidence, not with *a priori* theories.

My purpose is, to prove that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a fact which rests on the highest form of historical evidence. In doing so, I shall assume that no one who reads this tract will deny the truth of certain facts which are admitted by all the learned unbelievers of Europe; for to attempt to prove the truth of what they allow, would be a simple waste of time. I shall therefore take it for granted, that what such men as Strauss, Renan, Baur, and the whole Tübingen

school of critics admit, those with whom I am reasoning will not deny.

THE FACTS ASSUMED.

1. That Jesus Christ existed; that he collected around him a body of followers, who believed in him as the Messiah of popular expectation; and that he was crucified by the authority of the Roman government.

2. That the three first Gospels were published in the form in which we now read them, not later than some time during the first twenty years of the second century, and one of them not later than the last ten years of the first century.

3. That the four most important letters of St. Paul, *viz.*, that to the Romans, the two to the Corinthians, and that to the Galatians, were unquestionably written by St. Paul himself; and that the latest of them cannot have been written at a later date than twenty-eight years after the crucifixion.

4. That before the end of the first century, *i. e.*, within seventy years after the crucifixion, Christian churches were to be found in all the great cities of the Roman Empire.

If any of my readers should refuse to concede these points, I appeal from their judgment to that of all the eminent critical unbelievers of modern

Europe, and say, "Do not ignorantly deny to be historical facts what all your own great men affirm to have been so."

THE CHURCH EIGHTEEN CENTURIES OLD.

The first point of my proof is that the Christian church has existed as a visible institution, without a single break in its continuity, for a period of more than eighteen centuries; and that it can be traced up to the date which Christians assign for its origin by the most unquestionable historical evidence. Its existence therefore is a fact, and must be accounted for. What account, then, does this great society give of its own origin?

IT IS FOUNDED ON A FACT.

It asserts, and ever has asserted, that the cause of *its renewed life after the death of its Founder, was the belief not in any dogmas or doctrines, but in a fact—that Jesus Christ rose again from the dead.*

Now observe the importance of the fact that the Christian church is, and ever has been, a visible community. All communities must have had an origin of some kind. The supposed designs of its Founder were cut short by his execution by the authority of the Roman government. Yet it is certain that the institution which he founded was set agoing again after his death.

Its present existence proves this. The Christian church asserts in all its documents that the sole cause of its renewed life was not that *its followers found a new leader, but that they believed that Jesus Christ rose from the dead.* This therefore formed the foundation on which the society was reconstituted.

THIS THE ONLY RATIONAL ACCOUNT.

But observe further, if Jesus Christ rose from the dead, this forms a rational account of the origin of this great institution. If the fact be denied, those who deny it are bound to propound some other rational account of its origin. We affirm that no other theory can account for it.

Let me illustrate the importance of the calling into existence of a great historical institution, and of its continuous life up to the present time, as a proof of an historical fact. Let us take Mohammedanism as an example. The church of Mohammed has existed as a visible institution since the seventh century. It affirms that it owes its origin to the preaching of Mohammed at Mecca, followed by his being acknowledged as prophet and king at Medina. The facts, as reported by his followers, are adequate accounts of its origin, and the continuous existence of the Mohammedan Church from the seventh century to the present

day forms the strongest possible corroboration of the fact, as it has been handed down by its historians that its institution was due to Mohammed, and that certain occurrences, which his followers believed to have been real events in his life, were the causes of its existence. These events afford a rational and philosophical account of its origin.

THEORY OF UNBELIEVERS.

But unbelievers have adopted a summary way of disposing of the question of the historical character of Christianity. In place of the account which has been accepted by the church of its renewed life, they tell us that the three first Gospels consist of a bundle of myths and legends, interspersed with a few grains of historic truth, which were gradually elaborated in the bosom of the Christian society between A. D. 30 and A. D. 100. About the latter date, or shortly afterwards, three unknown persons made a selection out of a large mass of these stories, and published them in the form in which we now read them in the Synoptical Gospels. These gradually superseded all the other accounts, and were at length accepted by the church as the authentic account of the actions and teaching of Jesus. The fourth Gospel they affirm to have been a forgery, which first saw the light about the year A. D. 170. I

need hardly add that they also affirm that every miracle which is recorded in the Gospels is devoid of all historical reality, and owes its origin to the imaginations of these credulous believers.

My answer raises a distinct issue; let it be fairly met. It is this: There is one of the miraculous narratives in the Gospels which certainly could not have originated in this manner. This is the miracle of the resurrection of Jesus Christ: which—whether it occurred as a fact, or the belief in it was due to the hallucinations of his followers, or was invented as a fiction—was believed in by the church as a reality within an extremely brief interval after its Founder's death. This belief was the foundation on which the Christian church was erected, and the cause of its renewed vitality.

IT IS A QUESTION OF FACT.

Now I ask the reader to observe that if it is no fiction, but an historical fact, all the theories that have been propounded by unbelievers as affording an adequate account of the origin of Christianity fall to the ground, and the account of that origin which has been uniformly handed down by the church is the only one which will endure the test of rational investigation; in other words, Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JESUS CONCEDED.

As it is allowed to be an historical fact by all the distinguished unbelievers of Europe that an eminent Jew, named Jesus, collected a number of followers, who believed in him as the Messiah of Jewish expectations, I shall not waste time in proving that which no one possessed of competent information will dispute.

NO OTHER JESUS APPEARED.

Now it is evident that his public execution must have utterly extinguished their hopes that he could ever fulfil the expectations which they had formed of him. Such being the case, the community which he had attempted to found must have gone to pieces, unless a new leader could be discovered who was capable of occupying his place. But as its existence at the present moment proves that it did not perish, it is certain that it must have made a fresh start of some kind—something must have happened which was not only capable of holding it together, but which imparted to it a new vitality. It is no less certain that this was not due to a new leader who stepped into the place of the original Founder, but to a new use which was made of the old one. Our histories tell us that this new impulse was im-

parted to the society by the belief that he had risen again from the dead. Whether this belief was founded on a fact, or was the result of a delusion, it is evident that it could not have occupied many years in growing; for while this was taking place, the original community founded by Jesus must have perished from want of a bond of cohesion adequate to maintain it in existence.

THE RESURRECTION EARLY BELIEVED.

This being clear, I now ask attention to the fact that we have the most unimpeachable historical evidence that this renewed life of the church rested on the belief that its Founder, after he had been crucified, rose again from the dead. The proof of this must be derived from the four letters of the apostle Paul, which all the eminent unbelievers of modern Europe admit to have been his genuine productions. As these letters form historical evidence of the highest order, I must draw attention to their importance.

CONTEMPORARY LETTERS.

It has been often objected by unbelievers that we have no contemporaneous historical evidence. The first three Gospels, it is said, cannot be proved to have been written until seventy or eighty years after the events recorded in them, and the fourth

is a forgery. I reply, that even if we allow this, *for the sake of argument*, to be a correct statement of the facts—which it is not—yet we are in possession of letters written by one who was both a contemporary and also the most active agent in founding the Christian church. Now contemporary letters of this kind are admitted by all modern historians to be the most valuable of all historical documents. Of such we have an example in the letters of the great Roman orator and statesman, Cicero, which were collected and published after his death, about a century before St. Paul wrote his. They still exist, and it is not too much to say that they form the most important documents which we possess for giving us an insight into the history of Rome between B. C. 100 and B. C. 50. They contain a continuous reference to current events in which the great statesman bore a part, and they enable us to estimate the secret springs of the events of the time, and the agencies which brought them about, in a manner which we should utterly fail to do if we had nothing to trust to but the ordinary histories of the period. It is true that we could not compose a perfect history from them alone. Their allusions to current events are for the most part incidental; but the general facts of the history being known from other sources, they not only furnish the

strongest attestation to them, but they enable us to form a correct estimate of their true character in a manner which it would have been impossible for us to do if we had nothing but the histories to guide our judgment. In truth, Cicero's letters form the most important historical documents which have been handed down to us from the ancient world.

A similar historical value attaches to all collections of contemporaneous letters. Modern historians are continually hunting them up in every direction as the best means of throwing a clear light on the history of the past. They are far more valuable as a means of discriminating truth from falsehood than formal histories, even when composed by historians who were contemporaneous with the events. Such are frequently written under a strong bias, as, for example, Lord Clarendon's "History of the Rebellion." But the incidental allusions in letters frequently put us in possession of facts and motives which have been carefully concealed from the world. This is especially the case in confidential communications between friends.

FOUR LETTERS OF PAUL.

It is therefore impossible to overestimate the importance of the concession made to us by the

learned critical unbelievers of modern Europe, that beyond all question we are in possession of four documents of this description, carrying us up to the earliest days of Christianity. The latest date which can be assigned to them is *twenty-eight years after the crucifixion*. These letters put us into direct communication with the thoughts of the most active missionary of the infant church, and of those to whom the letters are addressed. Their character is such that they present us with a living picture of the entire man who wrote them—what he did, what he thought, and what he believed, with a freshness and a vigor scarcely to be found in any other letters in existence. By their means we can hold direct communication with their author, and almost put him into the witness-box. They depict him as he lived, thought, and moved; and they render it indisputable that he was a man of the most unimpeachable veracity. It is of no little consequence, then, that these letters, thus admitted to be genuine, form the most important of those which have been attributed to the apostle.

I rest my argument on these four letters alone. At the same time I must not omit to draw attention to the fact that no small number of eminent critical unbelievers admit the genuineness of four more; but the first four are amply sufficient for

my present purpose, and I shall therefore rest no portion of my proof upon the disputed ones.

WRITTEN FROM FRESH MEMORIES.

Having pointed out the value of contemporaneous letters, I now ask the attention of the reader to the fact that these four letters of St. Paul were written within that interval of time after the date of the crucifixion which the more rigid canons of criticism lay down as within the period of the most perfect historical recollection. There is no possibility of dating them eighty or ninety years after the events, as unbelievers for their own convenience endeavor to date the first three Gospels, in order that they may get time during which it might have been possible for a number of fictions to have grown up in the Christian church, and superseded the genuine events of its Founder's life. Not only were they written *within twenty-eight years of the crucifixion by one whose activity as a missionary of Christianity had extended over the preceding twenty years, but he was then of such an age that his historical recollections were good for at least fifteen years earlier.* Although he had not seen Jesus Christ before His crucifixion, he must have conversed with multitudes who had done so and had heard Him teach. In these letters, therefore, we are in possession of a contemporaneous

record of the highest order, amply satisfying the strictest rules laid down by the late Sir G. C. Lewis in his great work on the credibility of early Roman history, in which he has rigidly analyzed the value of historical evidence. As the subject on which he treats is one purely secular, and he is usually considered to be very strict in his demands for historical evidence, I refer the reader to this work with confidence.

Let us test, by our own practical experience, the value of historical recollections that are only twenty-eight years old. This period of time is three years less than the interval which separates us at the present year, 1882, from the *coup-d'état* which made Napoleon the third emperor of the French. Our recollections of that event are so lively that it is simply impossible that we could become the prey of a number of legendary stories respecting it. Such stories can only grow up after considerable intervals of time, when the recollection of events has lost its freshness, and the generation which has witnessed them has died out. Let the reader observe, then, that St. Paul, when he wrote these Epistles, was separated from the crucifixion by an interval of time not so great as that which separates us from the event in question. Add three years more, and it will include the whole of our Lord's ministry.

THE DATE OF PAUL'S CONVERSION.

The latest possible date which can be assigned for the conversion of the apostle is A. D. 40, or ten years after the crucifixion. But this is far too late; and several concurrent probabilities fix it at five or six years earlier. St. Paul therefore had the amplest means of information as to what were the beliefs of the Christians at this early period, and must not only have had the most positive certainty respecting what it was on which the renewed vitality of the church rested, but he could not have failed to have known that his primitive followers also ascribed a number of superhuman actions to our Lord. Nor was this all. For some time previous to his conversion he had acted the part of the fierce persecutor of the church. This fact we learn from his own pen. In acting this part, common sense would have suggested to him the necessity of minutely scrutinizing the tenets of the new society, and, above all, of investigating with the utmost care the foundation on which it rested: namely, the alleged resurrection of its Founder. He must therefore have been fully cognizant of the beliefs of the church in connection with this event, and as a vehement opponent he must have done his utmost to expose any delusion respecting it.

WHAT THE EPISTLES PROVE.

Having thus pointed out the value of St. Paul's Epistles as historical evidence, I will now state the chief facts which can be distinctly proved by them, and the nature of the evidence which they furnish of the historical truth of the resurrection.

1. They make it certain that not only did St. Paul believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ as an historical fact, but that he considered it as the foundation on which the life of the revived Christian community was based. Whatever may have been urged respecting his references to miraculous powers possessed by himself, his references to the miracle of the resurrection are of the most unimpeachable character. They are too numerous for quotation here; I will therefore only refer to one. In the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians he expressly asserts that if the resurrection of Jesus Christ is not a fact, Christianity is a delusion.

2. His mode of reference to this event proves that he not only himself believed in it as a fact, but that he did not entertain the smallest doubt that those to whom he wrote believed it as firmly as himself. He refers to it in the most direct terms; he also refers to it in the most incidental manner as the foundation of the common faith

both of himself and of those to whom he wrote. He evidently calculates that they would receive his statements respecting it without the smallest hesitation. Now nothing is more valuable than incidental references such as these to an event. They prove that the writer, and those to whom he writes, know all about it, and have a common belief respecting it. I ask the reader to observe how this is exemplified in the ordinary letters which we write. When we are of opinion that our correspondent is fully acquainted with an occurrence, we simply allude to it, without entering into a formal description of it; and we feel sure that our view of the fact is accepted by him. Such is the manner in which St. Paul refers to the resurrection of Jesus Christ throughout these letters, with the exception of 1 Cor. 15 and Gal. 1 and 2, where his reference is for purposes directly historical and controversial.

3. But observe further: there are circumstances connected with these allusions which render this testimony stronger than any other in history. Party spirit raged fiercely in two of these churches. In the Corinthian Church there were several parties who were more or less adverse to St. Paul. He names three of them, namely, an Apollos party; another, which professed to be the followers of St. Peter; and a third, which claimed in a

special sense to be the followers of Christ. Besides these he specifies a fourth party, which was especially attached to himself. One of these parties went to the extreme length of *denying his right to the apostolical office on the ground that he had not been one of the original companions of Jesus*. No small portion of the second Epistle is occupied with dealing with this party and defending his own position against them.

Such being the state of affairs in this church, it is obvious that if the party in opposition to the apostle had held different views respecting the reality of the resurrection from himself, the demolition of his entire defence would have been certain. He puts the question, "*Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?*" I do not quote these words as evidence that he had really seen him, but as a proof that if his opponents had not been firmly persuaded that the resurrection was a fact, it would have been an unanswerable reason for affirming that his claim to apostolical authority, based on his having seen the risen Jesus, was worthless, because he had not risen. This reference also proves that the Petrine and the Christ party in this church, which latter doubtless claimed to represent the most primitive form of Christianity, must have been firmly persuaded that the original apostles had seen their risen

Master. It is evident, therefore, that so far as the fact of the resurrection is concerned, St. Paul and his bitterest opponents in the church must have been agreed as to its truth.

4. The evidence which is furnished by the Epistle to the Galatians is still more conclusive. Here there was a powerful party, who not only denied St. Paul's apostleship, but who had so far departed from his teaching that he designates their doctrines by the name of *a different gospel*. This party had been so successful that they had drawn away a large number of his own converts. No one can read this letter without seeing that the state of things in this church touched him to the quick. It is full of the deepest bursts of feeling; yet the whole Epistle is written with the most absolute confidence that however great were the differences between his opponents and himself, there was no diversity of opinion between them that the belief in the resurrection of Jesus was the foundation stone of their common Christianity. Hear his words at the beginning of the letter: "Paul, an apostle (not from men, neither through men, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, *who raised him from the dead*), and all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia. I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of

Christ unto a different gospel, which is not another gospel; only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema." Gal. 1:1-8. Revised Version.

If St. Paul's belief and that of his opponents on the subject of the resurrection had not been at complete accord, no man in his senses would have thrown down such a challenge as that which is contained in these words, and also in terms equally strong throughout the entire Epistle.

5. But the evidence which is furnished in this letter goes far beyond the mere belief of the Galatian churches at the time it was written. It involves the testimony of two other churches: namely, that of the church of Antioch, and of the church at Jerusalem; the one the metropolis of Gentile, and the other of Jewish Christianity, and carries us up to the briefest interval after the crucifixion. St. Paul's opponents were Judaizing Christians, who professed to be the followers of St. Peter and St. James. St. Paul, in the second chapter of this Epistle, asserts that his teaching was in substantial harmony with that of these two great chiefs of the Jewish Church. It follows, therefore, as their professed adherents concurred

with him in believing that the resurrection was a fact, that these two apostles must have been persuaded that they themselves had seen their risen Lord, and that the whole Jewish Church must have concurred with them in this belief. This same chapter also makes it certain that the entire church at Antioch did the same at the period when St. Peter and St. Paul jointly visited it, and involves the fact of St. Peter's direct testimony to the truth of the resurrection. This proves for certain that this belief was no late after-growth, but that it was coincident with the renewed life of the Christian church immediately after the crucifixion.

6. Let us now consider the evidence furnished by the Epistle to the Romans.

If it be urged that St. Paul had founded the churches of Corinth and Galatia, and that even his opponents may have adopted his views on this point, the church at Rome, at any rate, was one which he had neither founded nor visited. It had evidently been in existence several years before he wrote his letter to them; and it was a church so large and important that he felt that he was in no danger of being misapprehended when he said that "*their faith was a subject of conversation throughout the whole world.*" It contained a large Jewish element; and from the number of stran-

gers who visited the imperial city there can be no doubt that among its members must have been representatives of every variety of Christian thought. Yet he addressed the church with the fullest confidence that its members held the same views respecting the resurrection as himself. This is set forth in the opening words of the Epistle: "Declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, *by the resurrection from the dead,*" Rom. 1:4; and the same truth permeates the entire contents of the Epistle.

We have thus fully proved, that within a period of less than twenty-eight years after the crucifixion, three large churches, separated from each other by several hundred miles, were all of the same mind in believing that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead; and that this belief formed an essential ground of the existence of the Christian community. I ask the reader to consider how long it must have taken for such a belief to have grown up among churches *thus widely separated*. It is useless, therefore, to assert that the miraculous stories of the Gospels grew up gradually during the first century, and that they thus became mistaken for history, for our evidence is simply overwhelming that the greatest of all miracles was implicitly believed in by the entire

church within less than twenty-eight years after the crucifixion.

7. But further: this belief was not then one of recent growth. The mode in which allusion is made to it proves that it must have been contemporaneous with their first belief in Christianity on the part of those to whom St. Paul wrote. Many of these, as we have seen, were Jewish Christians, who must have been very early converts, or have derived their faith from those who were. The allusions in the Epistle to the Galatians plainly include the testimony of St. James and St. Peter. We also find, by a most incidental allusion in the Epistle to the Romans, that there were two members of that church who had embraced Christianity before St. Paul. The allusion is so incidental that it is worth quoting: "Salute Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also have been in Christ before me." Yet they were all agreed on the subject of the resurrection. St. Paul believed it from the time of his conversion, *i. e.*, within less than ten years after the date of the crucifixion. Andronicus and Junias believed it still earlier. Peter, James, and John also believed it from the first; for St. Paul tells us that he communicated to them the gospel which he preached among the Gentiles, and that

they generally approved of it; and he informs us, in the fifteenth of First Corinthians, that both Peter and James had seen Jesus Christ alive after his crucifixion. The reader's attention should be particularly directed to the fact that in the Epistle to the Galatians he informs us that, three years after his conversion, he paid Peter a visit of fifteen days, during which he was entertained by him, and that during this visit he had an interview with James. As it is incredible that they did not explain their views to one another respecting this fundamental fact of Christianity, we cannot therefore err in assuming that we have here the direct testimony of these two men that they believed they had seen their Master risen again from the dead. It follows, therefore, that their belief in the resurrection was the foundation on which the church was reconstructed immediately after the crucifixion.

8. In the fifteenth of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul makes a very definite statement as to a number of persons who believed that they had seen Jesus Christ after he had risen from the dead. He tells us that on one occasion He was so seen by more than five hundred persons at once, of whom more than half were still alive when he wrote the Epistle. Now, consider how, in making this assertion, he must have put him-

self in the hands of his opponents, if this fact was not generally admitted to be true. They might have put an end to his reasonings then and there by simply exposing the falsehood of such a statement. The attempt of unbelievers to escape the force of this fact by the allegation that the apostle was careless of inquiry into the truth of such stories is here quite beyond the mark, for they forget that it was made in the presence of those who would have been only too eager to expose his misstatements if they had been able. But if these five hundred persons really believed that they had seen Jesus Christ after his crucifixion, how is it possible to account for so singular a fact otherwise than on the assumption of its truth?

9. But further: there were members of the Corinthian Church who were far from being disposed to accept with eager credulity the story of a resurrection from the dead; many who affirmed that a resurrection of the body was, if not impossible, yet a most undesirable event, and that all that was intended by the promise of a resurrection was a great spiritual change. Yet, with singularly defective logic, they admitted that the resurrection of Christ had been a bodily one. 1 Cor. 15:14-17. The apostle presses them with the following reasoning, to which I invite the reader's attention: How can you deny a bodily

resurrection hereafter, when you admit that Christ actually rose from the dead? If the resurrection of Christ had not been the foundation of the faith of the church, they might have made short work of the apostle and his logic, by simply denying the truth of the bodily resurrection of our Lord.

THE POINTS PROVED.

I have therefore proved, on the most unimpeachable historical evidence, that there is at least one miracle recorded in the Gospels which is neither a myth, a legend, nor even a mental hallucination which slowly grew during the latter half of the first century, but that it was fully believed in as a fact by those who gave the new impulse to the Christian church immediately after the crucifixion of its Founder, and that it formed the one sole ground of its renewed life. Let it be observed that I have foreborne to quote the testimony of the Gospels, because unbelievers affirm that their date is comparatively late. I have, therefore, simply made use of historical documents, the genuineness of which they do not dispute. It remains, therefore, to inquire whether it is possible that this belief could have been the result of some species of mental hallucination on the part of the primitive followers of Jesus, for this is the only possible alternative to its histori-

cal reality. But before doing so, let me briefly set before the reader the points which have been proved on historical evidence of the highest order.

1. That within less than twenty-eight years after the crucifixion the entire Christian church, without distinction of party, believed that the one sole ground of its existence was the fact that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead.

2. That at that period there were more than two hundred and fifty persons then living who believed that they had seen him alive after his crucifixion.

3. That the belief in the resurrection was held in common by St. Paul and his most violent opponents.

4. That it is an unquestionable fact that the entire Christian church believed in the resurrection of its Founder, as an essential ground of its existence, within six or seven years after the date of his crucifixion.

5. That at least three of the original apostles asserted that they had seen Jesus Christ alive after his death.

6. That within a few months after the crucifixion the church must have been reconstructed on the foundation of the belief that its crucified Messiah had been raised from the dead. I say a few months, because if the interval had been longer

while the belief was growing, the church must have perished in its Founder's grave.

THREE SUPPOSABLE ALTERNATIVES.

Such being the facts of which the historical evidence is unquestionable, it remains for me to examine whether they are consistent with any other assumption than that the belief in the resurrection was founded on a reality.

Let the reader therefore observe that there are only three possible alternatives before us.

1. Either Jesus Christ actually rose from the dead;

2. Or the belief in his resurrection was the result of a deliberately concocted fraud;

3. Or the original followers of Jesus were the victims of some species of mental hallucination.

Other alternative there is none.

It will be unnecessary to examine the second of these alternatives, because it has been abandoned by all eminent modern unbelievers.

MENTAL HALLUCINATION: TWO THEORIES.

Two theories have been propounded as affording a rational account of the origin of the belief in the resurrection of Jesus, on the assumption that it was due to the mental hallucination of his disciples. Of these the first is:

That they were so intensely enthusiastic and credulous that some one or more of them fancied that they saw Jesus alive after his crucifixion, and that they succeeded in persuading the others that it was a fact. This theory is technically called the theory of Visions. It has been propounded in many forms, but that of Renan may be cited as a fair illustration of it: that Mary Magdalene, in the midst of her grief and emotion, mistook the gardener for Jesus, fancied that he was risen from the dead, and communicated her enthusiasm to the rest.

The second is, that Jesus did not really die of the effects of crucifixion, but that he was taken down from the cross in a swoon, from which he awoke in the sepulchre; that he succeeded in creeping out of it in an exhausted state, in getting to a place of retirement, and died shortly afterwards; and that his credulous followers mistook this partial recovery for a resurrection from the dead.

I must ask the reader to observe, that to impart to either of these theories the appearance of plausibility, it is necessary to assume a boundless amount of credulity, I may say one that surpasses belief, on the part of the followers of Jesus. But when we ask that some proof should be adduced of the existence of this extreme credulity, the only

one which is forthcoming is, that the Jews of that period were habitual believers in supernatural and demoniacal agency.

I will deal with the second of these theories first.

THEORY THAT HE DID NOT DIE.

I allow that it was possible for a man who had been suspended for some time on the cross, if taken down and carefully treated, to recover. This, we are informed by Josephus, happened to one of his friends, though it was the exception, for two out of three died under care. But in the case of Jesus, unbelievers must meet the fact that he was in the hands of his enemies, who, as a matter of course, would have seen to his burial as a criminal who had been publicly executed, and have thus put the possibility of his recovery in his grave out of the question. It is true that our Gospels inform us that Pilate surrendered his body to his friends; our sole knowledge of this fact is derived from their testimony, but unbelievers affirm that they are unhistorical, and they cannot therefore in this particular case claim the benefit of it. If, however, they accept the statements of the Gospels on this point they are bound also to accept their further assertion, that Pilate took care to ascertain that Jesus had actually died

before he resigned possession of the body ; and that it was afterwards consigned to a sepulchre, the entrance of which was closed with a large stone. But those who propound the above theory cannot help admitting that a sepulchre hewn in a rock was a most unlikely place for a man who had been crucified to recover from a swoon which could be mistaken for death ; but even if this is conceded to be a possibility, they are met with the insuperable difficulty of a man in this wounded and exhausted condition being able to get out of a place, the doorway of which was closed by a large stone, and then succeeding in taking refuge in the house of a friend, and there hiding himself from the eyes of his inveterate foes.

But as after the crucifixion Jesus disappears from history, except on the supposition that he rose from the dead, unbelievers are obliged to admit that he must have died from exhaustion shortly afterwards. Now it is certain that if he left the grave alive he must have been kept in the closest concealment ; for if those who had succeeded in procuring his crucifixion had the remotest suspicion that he had done so they would not have allowed him to remain undisturbed, and consequently his disciples could not have ventured to have breathed a single word about a resurrection until they had succeeded in conveying

him to some distant place of safety. This, as all practical men know, would have involved insuperable difficulties; and in this case one or more of the followers of Jesus must have been guilty of a conscious fraud.

But further. It is also evident that if Jesus lived in concealment, his followers either had access to him or they had not. If the former was the case, it would have been impossible for them to have mistaken a wounded man's gradual recovery, for a resurrection; or one dying from exhaustion, for the Messiah of Jewish expectations. But if they never saw him, the idea that they should have believed that he was risen from the dead, and on the strength of that belief should have proceeded to reconstruct the church on the basis of his resurrection, and that they should have succeeded in accomplishing it, is far more incredible than the belief that all the miracles recorded in the Bible were actual occurrences.

But a Messiah who crept out of his grave, took refuge in retirement, and afterwards died from exhaustion, was not one who could satisfy the requirements of the community, which had been crushed by his crucifixion. His followers had fully expected that he was going speedily to reign, and lo, the cross was his only throne, and all expectations of a visible reign must have been

crushed. Yet it is the most certain of historical facts that the Christian community commenced a new life immediately after its original groundwork, that Jesus was the Messiah of popular Jewish expectation, had been subverted by his crucifixion. Nothing but a resurrection, or something which could be mistaken for it, could have served the purpose. Something must be done, and that quickly, or the church must have perished in its Founder's grave. It was necessary, therefore, that the old Messianic idea should be immediately reconstructed, if the instant dissolution of the church was to be averted. The church had before it the alternative of finding a Messiah on a new basis, or perishing. If it be urged that Jesus recovered from the effects of his crucifixion, and lived in retirement ever afterwards, and that his disciples mistook this for a resurrection, I ask in the name of common sense, even if it is conceivable that there was a single disciple capable of such credulity, how long would such a belief take in growing, so as to be accepted by the entire body, and to be embraced by them with such ardor as to cause them to proceed to the work of reconstructing the church on its basis? The truth is, that the requisite time is not to be had for the growth of such a delusion, for while the belief was growing, the church would have be-

come extinct from want of any bond to keep it united. Is it credible, I ask, that any body of disciples could have been induced to believe that their Master was risen from the dead, without being favored with an interview with him? and that he was the Messiah, while he continued to live in retirement in order that he might keep himself in safety from his enemies? or that they would have ventured to proceed to the work of reconstructing the church on the basis of his spiritual Messiahship, knowing well the opposition they were certain to encounter, unless they had been persuaded that they had received their Master's direct instructions to do so, and that he was able to impart to the attempt the probability of success? Credulity, however great, certainly has its limits, and such credulity as has been presupposed exceeds the limits of the possible. But besides all this, the theory cannot be made to bear the least appearance of plausibility, without assuming either the incredible fact that Jesus must have mistaken his partial recovery for a resurrection, or the alternative that he lent himself to the perpetration of a conscious fraud, with which not even unbelievers have actually dared, except by insinuation, to charge the Holy One of God.

THEORY OF VISIONS.

Let us now proceed to consider the remaining alternative, that the belief in the resurrection was due to the followers of Jesus having, under the influence of mental hallucinations, mistaken certain visionary appearances, the creations of their overwrought imaginations, for objective realities; and in consequence of this that they became firmly persuaded that they had seen and conversed with him after he had risen from the dead. Before doing so, however, let me draw the reader's attention to the all-important fact which is so habitually overlooked in this argument, that the historical condition of the case requires *that those who propound this theory, as affording an adequate account of the origin of the belief in the resurrection, should not only account for the origin of this belief as a mere belief, but for the erection of the church on its basis.* It is impossible too strongly to press this last part on the attention of unbelievers.

Let us however assume, for the sake of argument, that the original followers of Jesus were to the last degree credulous and enthusiastic, only observing that we have not one atom of evidence for the assumption. I am fully ready to concede that a belief in a certain round of supernaturalism is one which is very widely diffused among man-

kind, and that large numbers of marvellous stories are readily accepted on little or no evidence. It is comparatively easy to get men to believe that they have seen ghosts, and still easier to believe that others have seen them. But there is one marvel at which the most profound credulity stumbles, *viz.*, that a man who has actually died has been seen alive and conversed with in bodily reality. I doubt whether an authentic instance can be found of any one who has positively affirmed that he has seen and conversed with another after he was dead, not as spirit, but in bodily reality. The old pagans, who accepted supernaturalism enough, would have scoffed at such a belief as lying beyond the bounds of the possible; and would have pronounced any one mad who had affirmed that he had done so. I am aware that there are a few old pagan stories about men who had been brought back from the other world; but these were wisely placed by the poets in the remotest ages of the past. But in the present case history refuses to allow of any sufficient time for the story of a resurrection to have grown up in this gradual manner under shelter of the remote past.

What then is the fact with which in the present case those who deny the reality of the resurrection must inevitably grapple? It is none other

than this, that several persons must have believed that they saw the risen Jesus within a few days or weeks after his crucifixion, and what is more, conversed with him separately and in companies.

Let the reader imagine for himself the amount of credulity which would be necessary to enable a number of men and women to believe that they had not only seen and conversed with one who had been publicly executed at Newgate, and whose body was still close at hand mouldering in its grave, but who actually proceeded to found a society on the basis of that belief, and that society the greatest, the holiest, and the most mightily influential of all the institutions that have existed on this earth; and what is more, that they could actually succeed in the attempt.

THREE CONDITIONS OF HALLUCINATIONS.

Three conditions have been laid down, by those who have deeply studied the human mind, as necessary for the production of those mental hallucinations which have resulted in causing subjective impressions to be mistaken for external realities. These are *prepossession*, *fixed idea*, and *expectancy*. Now, nothing can be more certain than that, in the case of our Lord's disciples, these three principles, supposing them to have been existent in them, would have acted in a

direction exactly contrary to that which those who propound this theory as an adequate account of the facts above referred to require.

1. Their prepossessions were all in favor of a Messiah visibly ruling and reigning, and most adverse to the idea of a crucified one. The very idea of a crucifixion dashed in pieces their dearest hopes. Their prepossessions therefore ran directly counter to what this theory requires that they should have been to have produced the requisite mental hallucinations.

2. Such fixed ideas as they possessed, instead of producing a visionary set of instructions from their risen Master, to reconstruct the church on the basis of his spiritual Messiahship, would have infallibly led them to see visions in conformity with the old Jewish Messianic conception. If a fixed idea ever produces visions in credulous minds, these visions will certainly be on the lines of their old ideas, and will not generate new ones. Nothing can be conceived of as less revolutionary than "fixed ideas," and therefore they will not aid us one single step towards the generation of the idea of a spiritual Messiahship, or to the reconstruction of the church on its basis.

3. Of expectancy of a resurrection, the followers of Jesus certainly had none. The only possible ground for supposing that they had any

would be the assumption that our Lord had predicted the event in the most express terms. But this unbelievers do not venture to affirm, for to admit it would be inconsistent with their position. Some mere general utterance, such as that if he was martyred he would live again in the future success of his cause, is one far too general to produce that enthusiastic state of expectancy which would be necessary to create such visions of him risen from the dead as could be mistaken for objective realities, it being remembered that all the while his dead body must have been at hand in the grave in the custody of either his friends or his foes.

Hopeless, therefore, is the attempt to produce the requisite visions by the aid of either of these three principles.

It is easy for a student in his closet to invent the theory that Mary Magdalene, in the midst of her grief and dejection, mistook the gardener for Jesus, thought that He was risen from the dead, and communicated her enthusiasm to the rest; but those who have practical experience of the realities of things will be confident that this is much easier to say than to do. What! are we to be asked to believe that an enthusiastic woman succeeded in persuading a number of others that a person who had been executed only a few days

previously, and whose body was close by in the grave, had appeared to her in bodily reality, and that they therefore accepted the fact, that he was risen from the dead, without further inquiry? Did they do so, I ask, without being favored with a sight of him themselves; or did they all, in the height of their credulous enthusiasm, take to seeing visions of the risen Jesus, and mistake them for objective realities, when all this while the body was close at hand in the sepulchre? What next are we to be invited to believe in the name of philosophic history?

Further. Is it to be believed that his disciples without authority from him ventured to proceed to reconstruct the church on the basis of a spiritual and invisible Messiah in the place of a temporal and visible one, to make his person the centre of the life of the new system, and to lay the foundations of a universal church in place of the old theocracy? This brings us into immediate contact with the whole mass of insuperable difficulties with which the theory of visions is attended.

I must once more draw attention to the fact, that it is necessary that those who affirm that the belief in his resurrection was the result of a mental hallucination on the part of the followers of Jesus should account not only for that belief,

but for the erection of the church on the new basis of a spiritual instead of a temporal Messiah, and the other all-important changes in the entire movement which resulted from this change of front. I know that it will be urged that his credulous followers fancied that, although his body still continued in the hands of either his friends or his foes, he had been taken up into heaven, from whence he would come again after a short interval in his visible Messianic glory. But the church had in the meantime to be kept together, and this could only be done by reconstructing the Messianic conception on which it has been based. However, days, months, and years elapsed, and no return of Jesus took place. A thorough reconstruction of the entire basis of the original society became therefore more and more urgently necessary, if utter extinction was to be avoided. But it is an unquestionable historic fact that, instead of dwindling away, it grew and flourished immediately after its Founder's death. The reconstruction in question therefore must have been actually effected immediately afterwards. Are we to believe that the disciples would have ventured on such a step, unless they had been firmly persuaded that they had received definite instructions from their Master to make the transformation? or that a body of ignorant

fanatics, such as is supposed, had wit enough to invent the mighty change which has resulted in the erection of the church of Jesus Christ, and in the influences which from thence have issued on the world?

Let us return to the theory of visions. What then are we to be asked to believe? In place of the acceptance of the resurrection as a fact—a fact, be it observed, adequate to explain all the subsequent phenomena of the history of the church—we are invited to believe that the belief in it originated in the followers of Jesus seeing visions of their Master after his crucifixion, and mistaking them for realities. In that case they must have seen not *one vision, but several; not only singly and in solitude, but in bodies.* St. Paul's testimony on this point is express, and his means of information must have been ample. Will any one, with his Epistles in hand, venture to affirm that he wrote what he knew to be an invention of his own? He tells us that he had private interviews with Peter and James, and also that both these apostles believed that they had private interviews with the risen Jesus. Is it credible that he did not get this information from them, when he actually abode for a fortnight in Peter's house, and had a personal interview with James? He also tells us that on another occasion he had an

interview with at least one more of the original apostolic body, John; and he gives us the further information that the eleven apostles, when assembled together in a body, believed that on two separate occasions they had interviews with their risen Master. He also tells us that, on another occasion, He appeared to no less than five hundred in a body. Were all these visionary appearances? Did all the disciples take to seeing visions together, and to mistaking them for realities? When they thus imagined that they saw their Master singly and in bodies, did not one of them ask him a question; and if so, did he get a visionary answer? Is it credible, I ask, that circumstanced as they were, they did not ask him what future course he was going to adopt; or, in event of his removal, what course it was his pleasure that they should pursue with respect to carrying on the work which he had begun? That they should have put to him no questions such as these is simply incredible. To such questions they either got answers or they did not. If they got none, the bubble must have burst then and there. If they believed that they got answers, they must have been all visionary ones; and this must have involved a whole set of visionary conversations.

The fact that the church was reconstructed

shortly after the crucifixion renders it absolutely certain that the followers of Jesus must have believed that they had conversations with their risen Master, and that in these conversations he gave them his directions both to reconstruct the church and as to the mode in which they were to do so; for, as I have said, unless they had believed that they had received such instructions, it is simply incredible that they should have ventured on the attempt, and have dared to refound the church on the basis of his resurrection and spiritual Messiahship, and that too in the face of all the opposition they were certain to encounter. But if their belief in his resurrection was the result of an hallucination, then the instructions which they believed that they had received, and on which they successfully acted, must have been mere visions, the creation of their disordered imaginations. What is more, they must have all fancied that they heard similar utterances, or else there would have been a diversity of plans.

To enable us to accept theories like these as accounts of actual facts, requires on our part more than all the credulity which unbelievers ascribe to our Lord's primitive followers.

But observe further: the belief in the resurrection was no idle belief, like that of a common ghost story or an ordinary marvel. Such beliefs

begin and end in nothing; but this had an energy and power sufficient to reconstruct the church in the face of the greatest difficulties and perils. It was therefore no sentimental belief entertained by individuals who did nothing in consequence of it, but one which sustained the weight of an institution which has endured for eighteen centuries of time, and has acted more powerfully on mankind than any other known to history. This belief went on spreading, until within less than seventy years it had firmly established itself in all the great cities of the Roman Empire, and had shown itself capable of enduring the test of martyrdom. Where in history can be found an instance of a community which has been founded on the belief that a man who had been publicly executed rose again from the dead, and who was thus proved to be the King of the kingdom of God? Is it easy to persuade numbers of men and women to accept so astounding a fact? Where can be found an example of a great institution which has lasted for centuries, which has wielded a greater influence for good and a mightier power over the human mind than all other institutions put together, which has been erected on the foundation of a number of vulgar marvels?

What, I ask, has the whole mass of ghost stories, marvels, and current spiritism done to

reform the world? We have heard much in these modern days of spiritualism and its wonders; has there any great institution been erected on its basis, or is there any probability that there ever will? Are mankind, or any portion of them, the better or the wiser for its disclosures? To these questions there can be only one answer. Spiritism, with all its alleged powers of penetrating into the secrets of the unseen world, and all similar marvels, have achieved nothing; they have made man neither holier nor wiser; nay, they have not effected a discovery which has enlarged the knowledge or even made the fortune of any of its votaries. But respecting the gospel of the resurrection, the great Christian missionary could write to those who had actual knowledge of the facts, in the first of his extant letters, dating only twenty-three years from the crucifixion: "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father, . . . for our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power; . . . and ye became imitators of us, and of the Lord; . . . and how ye turned unto God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, *whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus,*" 1 Thess. I: 3-10; and as he wrote to another body of his converts

only four years later, after he had affirmed that before becoming Christians they had been guilty of some of the foulest vices which can disgrace mankind: "And such were some of you; but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God." 1 Cor. 6:11.

THE ONLY POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE.

The first of our three alternatives is therefore the only possible one. Jesus rose from the dead. If this was an actual event, it satisfies all the facts of history, and affords a rational account of the origin of the church. No other theory does anything else but make boundless demands on our credulity in the name of an unsound philosophy.

THE GOSPEL'S TRUE HISTORY.

I am now in a position to assign to the Gospels their proper place as historical documents. The above facts having been proved on evidence which is quite independent of their testimony, it is useless for unbelievers to affirm, as far as the resurrection is concerned, that they were written by nameless authors long after the events which they profess to record, for the truth of the resurrection can be proved independently of their tes-

timony. If, therefore, it is a fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, the *a priori* presumption against their miraculous narratives, the existence of which is the reason why unbelievers pronounce them unhistorical, is destroyed; nay, it becomes far more probable that Jesus Christ wrought miracles than that he wrought none. The Gospels, therefore, may be accepted for what they profess to be—memoirs of the ministry of Jesus Christ, composed by their authors with the design of teaching the fundamental principles of Christianity.* Their accounts are fragmentary, but are substantial narratives of facts. They were not written for polemical purposes, but for the edification of believers—a point which ought to be carefully noted by every student. It has been objected that their accounts contain narratives which it is difficult to reconcile with one another in minute details. I admit that such is the fact, and that this results from the peculiar class of writings to which the Gospels belong, *viz.*, not regular histories, but religious memoirs, which class of writings do not profess to furnish us with a complete and continuous narrative. The last thing which occurred to their authors was to guard against the objections of opponents. In their accounts of the resurrection they satisfy

* See the preface to St. Luke's Gospel.

all the conditions of the case. The events of that Passover Sunday must have thrown the followers of Jesus into the greatest excitement. The accounts of them given in the first three Gospels are exactly such as we should expect from men and women under similar circumstances. They are broken, disjointed, without any attempt being made to weave them into a complete whole, yet in all the main facts their testimony agrees, and they are fully corroborated by the more definite account of an eye-witness—the author of the fourth Gospel. This is exactly what they should be, if they contain the reports of genuine witnesses, and what they certainly would not have been if they had been written by men acting in mutual concert and with the design of smoothing over difficulties or answering objections. Let us hear on this point one of the highest authorities of modern skepticism. “It is useless,” says the “Westminster Review,” “to carp at small minor details. All histories contain variations, or, if you like to call them, contradictions on minor points. This has been the case with every history that has been written from Herodotus to Mr. Froude.”

Let unbelievers, therefore, join issue on the main facts of the Gospel history, just as they would with any secular history, and we will meet

them. Above all, let them not carp at minor details about miracles; but let them join issue on the truth or falsehood of that great miracle, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, on the truth of which the writers of the New Testament have staked the existence of Christianity; for if its historical foundation can be proved to be baseless, the Christian church must become a crumbling ruin. But if Jesus Christ has risen from the dead, Christianity must be a divine revelation, notwithstanding all the objections which have been urged against it by unbelievers, or any amount of alleged discrepancies with which they charge the narratives of the Gospels.

Christianity and Miracles,

AT

THE PRESENT DAY.

BY

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AUTHOR OF

"UNBELIEF IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY."

THE ARGUMENT IN BRIEF.

MIRACLES are shown to be, on the supposition of the existence of God, neither impossible in themselves, inconsistent with the order of nature, incapable of being proved by testimony, nor incapable of being decisively connected with God.

The marvellous character of the Bible, the transcendent character of the morality of the Bible, the harmony of the miracles of the Bible with its doctrine, are shown to be presumptions in favor of the miracles of Scripture.

The historical testimony to the miracles of the New Testament, and especially our Lord's Resurrection, is examined, and its bearing on this fact is shown. The Resurrection of Christ is shown to account for all the undeniable facts of the history, and the insufficiency of any theory that denies its reality to account for them is proved.

CHRISTIANITY AND MIRACLES,

AT THE PRESENT DAY.

THE alliance between Christianity and miracles is of long standing, in fact is inherited from the Old Testament religion; and for eighteen centuries, friend and foe have been here agreed, the one rallying to this position as an intrenchment of their own; the other, though sometimes affecting to despise it, not less looking askance upon it as an adverse stronghold. In our unsettled time, when everything is questioned, and not a little rashly abandoned, the argument for the truth of Christianity from miracles is in some quarters less insisted on. There are even Christian minds that have begun to waver at this point; while others, on the opposite side, are perhaps nearer believing their own illusive difficulties than at any former period. I am persuaded, however, that this discrediting of miracles is a great mistake, and that no procedure could be less wise than that of writers in the Christian ranks who seek here to

change front in the midst of action. Christianity—if it be worth anything as a remedy—is so essentially supernatural in its inmost essence and provisions that it cannot be detached from miracles without losing its virtue; and though there may be shades and varieties as well as improvements, in the way of putting this argument, nay, lawful differences as to its ultimate value in relation to other grounds of Christian belief, it must still take rank as a leading proof; and the nineteenth century, not less than the first, must accept of Christ's own challenge, "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not." Persuaded then, with ever-growing conviction, of the solidity of this argument, and of the futility of the objections drawn from metaphysics, from history, and from science against it, I shall endeavor, within the compass of this tract, to set it forth in the light of the present day.

It is necessary, in discussing this question, to begin with some DEFINITION OF A MIRACLE, so as to understand in what sense it is here employed. It may be spoken of then as an act of God which visibly deviates from the ordinary working of his power, designed, while capable of serving other uses, to authenticate a divine message. This restricts the argument to theists. Unless there be belief in a God able and willing

to make and attest a revelation, the whole argument from miracles is below the horizon. Had Hume been more thorough-going he would have taken his stand against miracles as excluded by his skepticism as to God. Had Spinoza been more open in his earlier treatise, he would not, while professing to believe in God, have assumed that the wisdom of God did not admit of either a revelation or such a proof of it; for this belonged to his later pantheism. And had Strauss, in our own days, been a more strict controversialist, he would not have wasted so much of his life in criticising the discords of the evangelists, but would have rested in his fundamental exclusion of God, that made the whole scheme of Christianity from the first incredible and subversive of reason. No one has been here more candid than the late Mr. John S. Mill. He sees that miracles belong to, and only belong to, the supposition of theism; and whatever may be thought of his objections to them, as not sufficiently proved to have existed in God's actual world, he deserves great credit for having admitted that the belief in miracles is perfectly rational on the part of a believer in God, and that it is a question of evidence and not of *a priori* theory.

With this preliminary clearing up of the state, and even of the terms, of the question, a number

of MISTAKES ABOUT MIRACLES that have gathered round it fall away of themselves. Some of these may be briefly noticed. The first mistake is, *that miracles are impossible*. To this much of the skepticism of our time verges, even where it does not bluntly assert it. Possibly this may be, because our belief has found by experience that it is not safe to grant so much as the being of a moral and personal Deity. Miracles, of course, fall with the denial of the only Being who can exercise a moral government, who can, in connection with that government, make a revelation, and who can so work in the physical world as to connect that revelation with his own divine power. It is seen at once that if God be possible, miracles are possible; and that hence nothing can preclude them but abstract atheism, or pantheism, or such agnosticism as makes the knowledge of God hopeless. It is a great consolation to the Christian that his belief in miracles can only be uprooted by virtual denial of God.

A second mistake, not so extreme, but still serious, is, that miracles are *inconsistent with the order of nature*. In so far as this puts nature in the place of God, and keeps him bound, as nature is without him held to be, by absolutely invariable laws, this is the same denial of God that has been already considered. So far, however, as the

position taken is that God has chosen to act in ways so invariable as to exclude miracle, and has revealed to us that choice, the distinction thus drawn easily leads to the discovery of the mistake. There would need to be full and conclusive evidence that it is God's will and choice to exclude miracle altogether from the realm of what is called nature, but which is only to a theist the field of God's own working. Is there, then, this full and conclusive evidence? It cannot be by revelation: for this would be to bring in revelation to exclude revelation. It can only be by what is called the light of nature; and the question recurs, Does the light of nature absolutely exclude any possible deviation by God from the wonted sequences of his operation? This would exclude every beginning and end of the universe, and every cosmical change that was not in the strictest sense the working out of foregoing law. On what can a skepticism so rigorous be based? It has been attempted to base it on our primary belief in the uniformity of nature, which is thus regarded as the voice of God to us warning us against trust in miracles. But is this so? Philosophers still dispute as to how far the expectation of uniformity in nature is a rational principle of knowledge or a mere instinct. But one thing is clear, that it cannot exclude the weighing of evidence for miracle;

otherwise, the origin or end of the world, considered as a scientific possibility, would be as summarily rejected as any hypothesis confessedly against reason. Canon Mozley has shown conclusively against Mr. Mill that the progress of science cannot exclude belief in miracle, for the very principle of induction on which science builds involves itself this prior belief in the uniformity of nature, which can thus receive from science no greater strength than it has at first. Nothing is more strange than the language of Mr. Mill as to the growing impossibility of belief in miracle as science advances; for this would leave the belief a scientific one to Sir Isaac Newton, or even to Hume and Gibbon, and deny it as such to Professor Huxley or Renan; not to mention that this assertion is entirely opposed to facts, as some of the most eminent men of science are still believers in miracles; and Mr. Mill himself finds a consolation in clinging to their possibility and the supernatural mission of Jesus Christ. The admission of miracles does not at all depend on a lax or unscientific conception of the course of nature. In fact, it can only build on recognized natural laws; and the discernment of these, and of exceptions to them, was as possible in the first century as in the nineteenth, as the words in the gospel history indicate: "Since the world be-

gan was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind." This limited, exceptional, divinely-regulated minimum of deviation, which leaves nature and science still standing as before, is all that Christianity asks in order to start this argument, and no principle of natural belief can pronounce the postulate inadmissible.

Besides, it is to be remembered that while in one sense miracles set aside law, in another and deeper sense they uphold it. The end of miracle, through the coming and works of Christ, is the restoration of moral order. The coming of Christ as a sinless Being is a miracle. Christianity is not an ordinary history, or even a great moral system incorporated with the life of its founder. It is, if it is anything, a system of redemption, based on the incarnation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, with a sequel of eternal results and issues, greater through union with Christ or separation from him than the ordinary immortality with its hopes and fears. This scheme is wrought out by the life and death, the dominion and influence, the second coming to judgment, and endless reign of Jesus Christ. Now this whole plan and system transcends natural laws, in any common acceptance of the word. It is believed to be in harmony with the highest laws of the Divine nature, and

to be the most glorious expression of them. But it is born of and lives by miracle, so that to refuse faith in this is to make sin the order of the universe. And if Christ needed to displace physical law in order to vindicate and restore moral and spiritual law, the conception of the universe which would exclude this interference is really a materialistic superstition, and so far from exalting God as the God of order, it surrounds him and his creatures with an outward barrier that shuts the way even to the "tree of life." It is by dwelling on the order of nature without that a prejudice against miracles has been created. A glance at the disorder of nature within restores the balance; and with the need, recalls the probability of a remedy, and of a remedy attended by miracle.

A *third* mistake as to miracles is, *that even if wrought, they could not be proved by testimony.* This is the celebrated argument of Hume, first published in a set of his essays in 1748, but which has not carried conviction, as he expected, and has even lately been declared by Mr. Mill to be inconclusive. Mr. Mill, in his "Essay on Theism," p. 217, says, "It is evidently impossible to maintain that if a supernatural fact really occurs, proof of its occurrence cannot be accessible to the human faculties. The evidence of the senses could prove this as it can prove other things."

Hume, however, never looks the senses, in connection with miracles, in the face. He dwells exclusively on testimony, and thus tacitly leaves it to be supposed that miracles are only matters of testimony; and this testimony he makes necessarily fallacious: for his argument is that our confidence in testimony being due entirely to experience, can never warrant our believing any reported departure from experience. If Hume had gone farther back, and supposed an eye-witness dealing with a miracle, he could not have advised that eye-witness to reject the miracle simply because the testimony of others had never reported anything like it; and then that eye-witness could not have been reasonably disbelieved himself, since testimony could not fail to convey what sense had vouched for. Hume, it is true, could not himself believe a miracle, because his philosophy left him in total doubt as to God. But it was otherwise with believers in God: and his assault on testimony had no value except as resting on his own premises. It may be added that there is a shadow of Hume's error in the not uncommon objection to miracles, that they lose their force with time, and at length vanish away. Why should this be so with miracles more than with secular history? The death of Ananias and Sapphira is as near to us as the assassination of Julius Cæsar. Tradition

loses its weight by successive removes, but not written history. Grant that the apostle John is the author of the fourth Gospel, his testimony is as good to us as if we had received it orally from himself. There is a signal absence of the historical sense in this objection; and there is no reason to think that a historian like Hume, if he could have granted miracles as once credible, would have supposed them decaying, though this idea only carries his distrust in testimony to a more paradoxical extreme.

The three mistakes as to miracles which have been considered are all due to forgetfulness of the fact that miracle appeals to a prior belief in God; and they are redressed when his agency and relation to nature are recalled to view. The same thing holds true of a *fourth* mistake, and the last which we shall notice, which still exerts a disturbing influence on some judgments: namely, *that miracles cannot be so decisively connected with God as to lend any sanction to an alleged revelation.* There is evidently no force in the general allegation that mere power can lend no support to teaching: for power is appealed to as a link to connect the teaching with God; and if such a connection be secured, its authority is then boundless. All ages have felt this, and have reëchoed the simple confession of Nicodemus: "We know

that Thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him." But the complaint is that though the connection, if it could be made out, would serve the end, the connection cannot be decisively established, since works apparently miraculous may still be due to ordinary laws, and not to divine interposition, or may even (so it is pleaded on Scripture grounds) be wrought by evil beings. This objection has often been taken, and is renewed, among others, by the author of "Supernatural Religion."

Now it may be granted that at times the defenders of revelation have undertaken too much by speaking as if a line could in all cases be drawn to mark off miracle from nature; whereas it was enough to fix on the leading miracles of the Bible as decisively supernatural in their character, since with these alone was there any concern: and it may be also admitted that Christian writers have differed somewhat in their interpretation of those passages of Scripture which connect miracle, or the appearance of it, with evil agency. Neither of these circumstances, however, abates the evidential value of the Bible miracles. They still stand out as sharply as ever—distinguished from all natural phenomena. It is because rationalism could not reduce them to natural facts

that it tried to make them myths. No science can ever reduce to its uniformities a fact, if fact it be, like the death of the firstborn in one night. The cures of our Lord seem still as little like the fruits of secret medical knowledge as in his own day; while the most thorough-going skepticism rejects most scornfully the theory that his resurrection was a mere natural recovery from an incompleting death. There is thus in the miracles of the Bible—abating some obscure instances—a broad stamp of distinction from extraordinary, though still natural phenomena; while there is a plan, a method, a reigning spirit, which takes them completely out of the region of the mere random wonders and portents of Livy, or the childish marvels of the later ecclesiastical historians. It may be confidently affirmed that if the Bible miracles are not recognizably divine, none can be so; and thus the extremely skeptical position would be reached, that a Being who wished to make a revelation, and sought to attest it by a seal which the general sense of mankind has connected with such a communication, could not thus stamp it by any sign of distinctive power.

Equally futile is the objection that the alleged Bible miracles may be due to evil agency. The deniers of revelation do not themselves believe in such agency, superior to human, yet adverse to

the divine: but only bring it in to perplex and disconcert Christians. But if they borrow this Christian doctrine to turn it against its own adherents, they ought to remember the limitation within which it is held. However Christians may differ as to the amount of confusion which evil beings may be permitted to introduce by working what may be mistaken for miracle, they all hold that under the government of God sufficient light is granted to make the distinction possible to every humble and candid mind, either by the true power which is divine visibly transcending every other, or by moral features in the revelation appealing to conscience, in a way which no pseudo-revelation can counterfeit. The Christian is thus not embarrassed by this *argumentum ad hominem*, and what is equally important to the validity of this reasoning, neither is the theist.

The theist to whom the Christian offers the Bible, and with whom he argues on the ground of miracle, cannot deny that the supreme Power may be able to outshine, even to human eyes, on this field, all rivalry, and still more, to interweave the revelation professedly given with such moral features and accompaniments that no fair observer can trace it up to an evil source. The reasoning of our Lord with the Pharisees, that Satan could not cast out Satan, was, no doubt, addressed to

believers in revelation; but it is equally applicable to believers in God simply, who as such cannot believe in him without believing that all agencies and events are under his control, and that he will not suffer the elements of nature to be so turned out of their course by evil beings as to mimic any supposed signature of God or defeat his purpose—if he has one—thus to confirm a revelation. Who ever heard of any theist who was prepared to say, “I admit an element of miracle, so far as God’s working, otherwise known to us, is concerned. I allow the credibility of miracles in the abstract, and I allow the moral features of the Bible to be reconcilable with a divine origin; but I cannot decide that they have one, because the apparent signs may be due to evil powers not sufficiently restrained”? Now, it is with theists that we reason here, and not with the author of “Supernatural Religion;” and till he can bring us theists who are satisfied on other grounds, but take their last stand against the gospel on this, all his air-drawn difficulties go for nothing.

Having thus endeavored to remove these mistakes as to miracles, it might be our next task, as it is our principal one, to go on to the evidence of fact and history that the Christian miracles have actually been wrought. But in order to do justice to the argument, it is necessary first to state

SOME PRESUMPTIONS WHICH LEAD TO THIS CONCLUSION and predispose the mind, great as the demand made upon faith by miracles is, to concede it. The considerations about to be named are of varying weight; and they are evidences of the truth of Christianity by themselves; nay, in one case, more central to the proof than even miracles; nor are they the only ones that might be named. But they are here brought forward only as leading up and lending help to the direct argument drawn from miracle in the common sense of the word.

There may be mentioned then, *first*, as a presumption in favor of the reality of the Bible miracles, the wonderful nature of the book in which they are recorded. There is here what may be called a *literary* miracle. I do not ask any one at this point to believe in inspiration, and from the self-evident inspiration of the Bible to accept this part of its contents, though there can be little doubt that this self-evident superiority to all other books goes a long way to secure for the Bible claim to inspiration its wide acceptance. But it is not because the book is divinely true that I ask it to be here regarded, but because it is outstandingly wonderful. This fact no one, even the most skeptical, can deny. The Bible is itself a phenomenon, embracing master-pieces in every

department of literature, from the most unlikely hands. Renan, for slight reasons, denies that the Gospel of Matthew is the work of a Jewish publican; but he admits that it is of equally obscure origin, and yet says that, "all things considered, it is the most important book of Christianity, the the most important book that ever has been written."* The Gospel of Luke he grants to be the work of its received author; and says, in regard to the Saviour's birth, "This exquisite pastoral, traced with a gentle outline upon the front of Christianity, has never been surpassed by any strain more fitted to lull the woes of poor humanity;"† and in general he says of this Gospel, "It is the most beautiful book in the world."‡ Of the Gospels as a whole he also says, "The composition of the Gospels is, next to the personal action of Jesus, the capital fact in the history of the origin of Christianity; I will add, in the history of humanity."§ It would be easy, were it necessary, to quote other tributes to the stupendous literary greatness of the Bible. One may be taken from Gibbon, where he contrasts the book of Job with the Koran; and it is all the more remarkable as belonging to a century in which, as Macaulay says, Voltaire decried Ezekiel in the same

* "Evangiles," page 212.

† Page 283.

‡ Page 278.

§ Page 213.

narrow spirit as he did Shakespeare. "The harmony and copiousness of style will not reach in a version the European infidel: he will peruse with impatience the endless incoherent rhapsody of faith and precept and declamation, which seldom excites a sentiment or an idea, which sometimes crawls in the dust and is sometimes lost in the clouds. The divine attributes exalt the fancy of the Arabian missionary; but his loftiest strains must yield to the sublime simplicity of the book of Job, composed in a remote age, in the same country, and in the same language."* The Bible is confessedly the greatest classic in the English or German language, we may add, even in the French: and its influence has immeasurably transcended that of all others. Does not this agree with the supposition of miracle in connection with the system to which it belongs? Could the presumption be greater? and how world-wide is the contrast, as Gibbon acknowledges in regard to Mohammedanism, with every other religion?

A *second* presumption, even stronger, for the reality of the Bible miracles, is *the transcendent character of the morality* with which they are associated. At no point has Christianity come out of the struggle of centuries stronger than here. The greatest of moralists like Kant have treated

* Gibbon (Bohn's Ed.), Vol. V. p. 474.

the New Testament as containing a full moral system; and attacks on the Christian morality, as erring, either by excess or defect, have to a large extent ceased. Mr. Mill, who, in his essay on "Liberty," had charged Christianity on this head with at least incompleteness, has in one of his posthumous "Essays" made the remarkable statement that no one could find a better rule of life than to act in every case so as that Christ would approve of his conduct. The only really influential objections to the Christian morality are those connected with its difficulty, and its failure to realize itself among professed Christians; and this has caused the gospel to suffer more than all other hindrances put together, for the inconsistencies of Christian nations and churches have been seen and read of all men, while the excuses for those failures, and even the attempts to clear Christianity from this reproach, have not been equally successful in impressing the general mind. Still it is a great and singular thing for any system of morality to be complained of chiefly because it is too high and ideal; while at the same time all candid minds allow that Christianity has here been immensely effectual in elevating the moral standard of the world, and in bringing round a state of things when its own strictness and elevation shall seem less hopeless as a prevailing as-

piration and attainment. What is true of the New Testament here is inclusive of the Old. They must be partial judges who deny here a radical identity, which Christ himself and his apostles, notwithstanding some difficulties of fact and interpretation, acknowledged between the earlier and later development of the same revelation. The Old Testament had something of the same height relatively to everything outside itself as the teaching and institutions of Christianity still have; for what could be found among ancient nations with anything of the same practical weight and impression as the Decalogue, the Psalms, the book of Proverbs, and the moral lessons of the Prophets? while these have all been found capable of being taken up into, and mingling their force with, the mightier impulses of Christianity. That a great moral system like this should be connected with miracle, and gain its support, is something totally different from the transient, scattered, and for the most part legendary and useless miracles that rise up out of the mere love of the marvellous or under the spell of superstition. The purpose is truly great and godlike, worthy of miracle if miracle could help, and, taken in conjunction with the success which has followed, warrants the presumption that miracle has here been at work, and not in vain.

The *third* and the only other presumption which shall be noticed here for the reality of the Bible miracles, is their *harmony with the doctrinal system* which they are brought in to establish. It is a common fault of those who undervalue miracles to overlook this, and to treat the miracle and the doctrine as something belonging to different spheres, and only externally applied to each other, somehow as the royal stamp on a book is to its contents. But in point of fact, the whole of Christianity relatively to ordinary teaching is inward miracle; and out of this the miracle, commonly so called, grows as a product, and hence as a witness. The common Christian view of the birth of Jesus Christ—of the union in him of the divine and human natures—of his atonement and intercession, and of his exaltation to dispense the Holy Ghost and reign over the spirits of men in his church, and even outwardly in the universe, all this is so far from being God's visibly ordinary way of action as disclosed in natural providence, that it rises above the thoughts of men as far as the heavens are above the earth. Hence this scheme, in its whole texture supernatural, cannot be carried through without special acts occurring that have been distinctively called miracles, though they are not more miraculous than the rest. For one who is God incarnate to

rise from the dead is not more miraculous than to be God incarnate; nor is it so to ascend to heaven, and thence to usher in the day of Pentecost, and to control and govern the church by his Holy Spirit. There must be miracle, if there is to be salvation. The laws of human nature must be transcended by the divine being united with the human. The human body could not be surrendered to defeat, and the incarnation so far be made void by the Saviour remaining in the grave. Nor could the same law that applied to others who were raised, limit the risen life of Christ, or detain him upon earth. Miracles had thus, according to the true Christian conception, a deeper design than to be evidences of Christianity. They had to be vital and integral parts of Christianity. But this did not hinder them from being evidences too; and as evidences they have a reason and a credibility which would be wholly wanting if they were extraneous and supplementary parts engrafted upon an otherwise non-miraculous system. Take for example our Lord's so-called miracles of healing. Would it have been more credible that the Son of God, invested with divine powers, should stand in the midst of human disease and misery without any outbursts of mightier sympathy and help, and that he should be warned back by the very laws of nature that were his own creation?

Or is it not credible that he should in these cures have revealed and imaged his deeper power to heal the soul? When from the starting-point of Christianity he could not be a Saviour at all without miracle, is there not in the expansion and development of this principle, and in the applying of it as he does to support his own claims, a beautiful inward harmony which is a presumption of truth, so that never could any religion set forth this evidence from so lofty and consistent a ground as that of Him who says, "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works."

With these explanatory and introductory remarks, it is now time to consider the argument for the reality of the Bible MIRACLES AS POSITIVELY ATTESTED BY HISTORY. The argument is very extended, taking in the Old Testament as well as the New. But it has been universally felt that the strength of the argument lies most in the New Testament period, because, while the Old Testament wonders are sufficiently attested, and are even vouched for in the New Testament, while also held up by the ever-increasing authority of the Old Testament in matters of ordinary history, there is not the same abundance of con-

temporary literature, nor reigning clearness in regard to the authorship of books and similar matters affecting testimony. The question shall, therefore, be limited to the miracles of the New Testament, though every one can see that the miracles of the Old Testament are not to be looked on as a hindrance, but a help; and we can understand how different our position would have been had the New Testament revelation been confirmed by striking miracles, while the Old Testament oracles did not enjoy the help of so much as one. Again, among the New Testament miracles, those of Christ himself are the most fitted to attract close and prolonged study; and among these, by universal consent, one stands out as pre-eminently important, the miracle of his resurrection. Even an unbeliever may be impressed by the thought that Christ (as recorded) rested his claims on this sign, in preference to others; for it has turned out to be the strongest, and this by any natural means Christ could not have known.

CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

In considering the evidence of Christ's resurrection, the same method is perhaps best taken which is employed in any other question of fact. Nothing is taken for granted, but that a miracle like the resurrection may be a fact of history: all

else is proved like any other matter which history may embrace. And this is proved by three sets of arguments: *first*, the positive testimonies, more or less direct, to the fact of the resurrection; *secondly*, the agreement of this supposition with other facts in the history; and, *thirdly*, the failure of every other supposition opposed to the resurrection to account for these facts.

In discussing, then, the testimonies, it is best to begin with those that are farthest off from the centre; and here there is to be placed in the outer circle the unanimous, unbroken *belief of the whole Christian church of the first century* from the beginning. This indeed is not direct testimony; but it is testimony in so far as the consenting belief of contemporaries who are interested in a matter of fact, and have every motive to test it, is testimony to its historical reality. No Christian could become one without believing in the resurrection, and without avowing it. Christianity was thus built on alleged fact from the beginning, as if Mohammed had been held to have been killed in one of his battles, and to have returned to life. There are modern Christians, so-called, who think the resurrection of Christ unimportant; but not so then. The belief was universal, and was accounted vital. Celsus ridicules Christians for believing on so slender an evidence as that of an excited

woman; but he allows the uniformity of the belief. Nor did it grow up by degrees, but was as strong from the first, as we see among other proofs, from the observance of the "Lord's day." This is mentioned in Rev. 1:10 as already in use in Asia Minor; and this writing is carried up by the most extreme critics of our time to a date before the fall of Jerusalem, and regarded by many of them, who accept so little as apostolic, as the work of the apostle John. Nothing but belief in a fact behind it—a fact which to their own mind they had sufficiently verified—could have led Jew and Gentile thus to break away from their old calendar, and put first in the new a once despised and rejected name. It was on this "stated" day (*die stato*), as Pliny tells us, that the Christians met to sing hymns to Christ as God, and that, as Justin Martyr, about the middle of the second century, assures us, they dedicated the once pagan day of the sun as a memorial alike of the old and new creation. But it is needless to enlarge on this universal, immediate, unbroken, monumentally-confirmed testimony. The whole New Testament, besides what is specially devoted to express testimonies, is here a voucher of belief; for hardly a book of it but contains some distinct reference to the faith of Christians in this fundamental fact of Christianity.

When we pass beyond this widest circle, including all Christian men, we come to a much narrower, made up of *Christian writers*, who attest the result of their inquiries or their own actual knowledge in regard to the fact of the resurrection. Those who state the results of inquiries are the two evangelists, Mark and Luke; those who have been generally believed to have been eye-witnesses are the evangelists Matthew and John; while the apostle Paul stands between the two classes, not originally a witness of the resurrection scenes, but having later intercourse with the risen Jesus. In examining this various testimony we have, in arguing with others, to leave out of account the inspiration of the writers as Christians believe in it, and consider only their capacities as recorders and witnesses of fact; and we have in the same way to accept the best conclusions, on ordinary historical grounds, as to the genuineness and antiquity of the four Gospels and the writings of Paul which bear on this subject.

The questions of a critical nature as to date and authorship which arise have naturally occupied much attention; but the results may be very briefly stated. The fundamental passage of Paul in 1 Cor. 15 is uncontested by the most extreme criticism. In like manner, the hasty allegations of Baur and Strauss as to a very late date of Mark

and Luke, have been recalled, among others by Renan, who concedes that the Gospel of Mark is the work of the companion of Peter, and Luke that of the companion of Paul, who also writes the Acts. So, also, the whole of recent discussion is favorable to the genuineness of the Gospel of John. Sixty years ago Eichhorn, the leader of rationalist criticism in Germany, would not listen to any objections to the received view. Now, after a long and most earnest debate, the tendency—even of rationalism—is to return to the old position; while the highest names of the semi-rationalist school—Bleek and Ewald—have never countenanced this deviation; and more orthodox writers, like Beyschlag and Luthardt, have met it at every point—the aberration being all through in Britain and America wondered at rather than followed. The Gospel of Matthew has also profited by recent criticism in Germany, which has floated it back to a much earlier date than was contended for by Strauss; and the old received opinion, that its author was an apostle and an eye-witness, has not been essentially shaken, whatever difficulties may arise from the statements of early writers as to a separate Hebrew and Greek form of his Gospel, and the want of materials thoroughly to clear up this critical question. It may be added that the case would not be vitally

altered in regard to the resurrection were the Gospel of Matthew—as all moderate rationalism admits—an ordinarily good historical record of the first century, and connected with the inner Christian circle, like the Gospels of Mark and Luke. Strauss, among others, uses Matthew as sufficiently trustworthy to found an estimate of the Saviour's life upon; and if unbelievers may use it historically for their purposes, why should its value cease in the hands of Christians?

What is now the bearing and worth of this mass of testimony? It is impossible to examine it in detail; but two main points, independent of each other, stand out—the discovery on the morning of the third day that the tomb was empty, and the various appearances of Jesus to his disciples, by whom he was recognized. Paul vouches only for the appearances; but the evangelists also for the finding of the tomb empty. In regard to this latter point, the indications in Matthew and Mark are verified by the actual explorations in Luke and John; so that, if we attach any credit to these writers at all, the fact is proved. Nor did it need any special witness, for it was not in itself a miracle to find a tomb empty where a body had lain. But much more various, strong, and, as befitted the case, singular in their force as evidence, are the recorded appearances of the risen Saviour.

There are appearances common to all the Gospels: that to Mary Magdalene, and if we grant the last verses of Mark 16, that to all the apostles, which is also affirmed by Paul. There is in all the Gospels the similar part played by women. There is in all an original element of doubt and fear in connection with the fact of resurrection; and there starts up in all a most wonderful mental and spiritual likeness of the risen Saviour to his former self, as, for example, in Matthew and Mark (as supplemented), the apostolic commission; in Luke, the discourse on the way to Emmaus; in John, the scenes with Mary, with Thomas, and at the Sea of Galilee. We can thus see for ourselves the very process by which the disciples were convinced, and can judge of its reasonableness; for, convincing as the bodily marks were, the evidence of resurrection lies even more in identity of soul than of body, and we can feel how unspeakably beyond invention were these incidents and utterances, while also so full of the past and so pregnant with the future.

The argument is rounded off by the appearances that are recorded by separate writers—one or more—as in Paul those to Peter and James, in Matthew to the women, and so of others. It has been made an objection that there is not room for all the appearances; but this has never been

proved, and, on the contrary, in forty days there was opportunity, as the narrative bears, for more. And however difficult it may be to harmonize all the accounts, especially as to the first day, this, as has often been remarked, is the inevitable accompaniment of all narratives, however authentic, that travel over the same ground. It is wonderful how much has been done by scholars to show the compatibility of one part of the various records with the rest; and though this is probably an insoluble problem, it is striking how slight hints in one Gospel or in Paul are borne out in some other place. Thus, our Lord's appearance to Peter in 1 Cor. 15 is confirmed by the message in Mark to Peter; the race of Peter to the sepulchre in Luke is enlarged in the fourth Gospel into that of Peter and John; and the appearances in Galilee, of which there is not a word in Luke, reappear in the last of the Gospels. Incidents like these go a long way to balance alleged discords, and show that we are on the track not of fabrication or license, but of real, though various, history.

One great merit of this testimony is, that it is not carefully adjusted and dovetailed into a legal argument. Some critics have rashly wished for this, and have blamed the Gospels because they are not cast in the mould of a *procès verbal*, signed

and countersigned by witnesses and authorities. The Gospels were not written to prove a series of points so much as artlessly to unfold the life, death, and victory of their great subject; and the delineation of character is more with them than the establishment of incident. But with all their disregard of legal dress and technical vouchers, how strong is the body of proof which these writers have piled up almost unconsciously into one of the clearest of moral demonstrations! Could the apostle Paul have thrown out at random, when speaking with the solemnity of an oath, a set of impressions as to Christ's appearings which he had rashly taken up, even to the extent of asserting one made to more than five hundred persons at once, the most of whom are affirmed to be still, after a quarter of a century, alive, while others are known to be dead? De Wette could not resist this testimony, but says in his "Commentary," "The testimony of the apostle decides as to the certainty of the fact." But how many critics of inferior order have supposed that a writer like Paul, who was so entirely at home in every matter affecting what to him was the very centre of existence, could, when laying down the very articles of faith and hope, have been so ignorant or so careless as to have made the most circumstantial statements of fact without inquiry or

foundation. Not less strong is Luke, who is admitted by Renan to have been the companion of Paul, and consequently with him, in Jerusalem and in Cæsarea, during his imprisonment of two years. How fresh must everything still have been, after the lapse of six or seven and twenty years, to an eager investigator, who doubtless met in Palestine with eye-witnesses of the Gospel history, and who in his Gospel claims to have "traced the course of all things accurately from the first." (Revised Version.) Mark likewise, whose authorship is not questioned, belongs to the most select circle of the companions of the apostles, the friend and fellow-laborer of Paul and Peter, the nephew of Barnabas, and more even than Luke mixed up with the rise of the new faith, as a Jerusalem Christian, and one whose personal recollections went back to the time of the ministry and death of Jesus. Still stronger is the testimony of the fourth Gospel, as the work of an eye-witness, of a leading apostle, and of our Lord's most intimate human friend. The deniers of the supernatural were bound sooner or later to have disputed this work, for it does not seem that their position can possibly endure its uncontested authority. But now that they have made the utmost effort in this direction, and failed, the evidence of the resurrection comes forth all the clearer from one to

whom the face and form of his Master were the most cherished of remembrances, who had been at the bottom of His empty grave, and who was fitted as none other to catch and to perpetuate the spiritual features, as well as the bodily, which re-appeared, brightened but not altered by the victory over death. The testimony of Matthew—another eye-witness, and from the more Judaic side of Christian teaching—confirms the record; and it is worthy of notice, in reply to those who have sought by an alleged fundamental discord in doctrine to invalidate the evidence for the resurrection and other gospel facts, how the fact of the resurrection is as necessary to the first Gospel as to the fourth, leading in as it does the fullest statement of the Trinity, taking up the lessons of the baptism and the transfiguration, and harmonizing with itself utterances ever-recurring, as in Matt. 11:25-30, of a grandeur and sublimity not distinguishable from those of the last of the evangelists.

Let it be added that we have, not only in the existence of these written testimonies, but also in their reception and public use from the beginning in the Christian church (which is something distinct from the universal belief in the resurrection), a powerful argument. The Gospels were used as soon as they existed. For this we have

the testimony of Justin Martyr in his first Apology (chap. 67); and all that has been said to shake this position leaves their alleged coming into use between their origin and his day, which after all was in much less than a century, wholly unexplained. It was thus not a mere generality as to the resurrection that the church took up, but particular narratives, full, circumstantial, and capable at every point of contradiction or verification. No history has ever received such an adhesion, for the original witnesses and converts were but a handful; and every accession of new converts carried with it a guarantee never equalled for sincerity and conviction, and that on the part of men thoroughly competent to inquire for themselves.

This brings us to the *second* point necessary to be urged, in addition to the separate weight of the testimonies, viz., how far the admission of the resurrection accounts for *other undeniable facts of the history*. Among these, two stand out pre-eminent as rationally accounted for by the fact of the resurrection. The one is the change of mind produced on the disciples, and the other is the impression made on the world by the Christianity which began immediately to be proclaimed. The first of these facts is incontestable. We know indeed only from the Scripture narrative itself of the extreme depression of the apostles, and of the

joy and confidence which succeeded. But nothing was so natural as the shock given them by the crucifixion; and nothing was ever more naturally described. How then did this give place? Nothing so completely accounts for it as the great event which came between, and the operation of this is in the Gospels a beautiful mental study. It has been asked, indeed, why the apostles were not more cheerful if Christ had promised to return. But the mistake as to the meaning of his death rather overwhelmed them with disappointment than allowed hope to revive, and a new and joyful fact was the only thing that could work a change. There is a profundity, as well as a simplicity, in this part of the gospel history which has always been admired; and when the resurrection is denied, the change to hopefulness sinks into mere weakness and enthusiasm. Dr. Baur, the leader of the Tübingen school, never missed the mark more than when he said that it is of no consequence how the apostles came by the belief of the resurrection, for the mere belief would anyhow do the same work. This is to build the world upon delusion, and to make groundless fancy as a moral force equal to the natural, steady, and effectual action of truth.

Still more impressive is the harmony between the resurrection, taken as a reality, and the start

it gave the infant and apparently defeated Christian cause. Lessing was so struck with this that, in spite of all the difficulties which he found in the resurrection story as now before us, he felt that truth lay at the bottom of what so prevailed. The church becomes the aggressor, and the world yields. It is lamentable if, in such a case, humanity could not hold its own against mental weakness. Strauss has bitterly complained of belief in the resurrection as the "humbug of history." But the unreasonableness of belief in it as not a fact, is the exact measure of the reasonableness of belief in it as a fact which could not be gainsaid. It is the test of its suitability to solve the history. It explains the helplessness of the adverse party, the paralysis which hindered every effort at confutation or exposure as by the production of the Saviour's body, and the depression which shut up the Jewish opposition to silence or to unreasoning violence. It also accounts for such wild rumors as that the disciples had stolen the body. This has been charged home as a Christian slander on the Jewish authorities. But the Christians had no motive to invent such a calumny, which evidently comes from the other camp. And it must be remembered that much as this report has been scouted by recent unbelief, so scouted that it has been utterly denied to have

had a place in the thoughts of the Jewish rulers, it was, though a weak invention, such a one as men fall upon when perplexed and baffled; and so late as last century the truth of it was made by Woolston the basis of his attack on the credibility of the resurrection.

Having thus shown the sufficiency of the great fact of the resurrection to clear the field of history all round, it only remains to touch on our *third* point, viz., *the discord with history which the denial of the resurrection introduces*. So far as this is the opposite of what has been already urged, it has been virtually considered. But there is more than a blank; there is a positive collision, when the denier of the resurrection goes on to give some positive theory of how the alleged resurrection originated, and seeks on the ground of that theory to explain the facts of the case. A rapid review then of the negative theories of the resurrection will close this paper.

The weakest of all the theories is that which traces up the current belief in the resurrection to fraud and imposture on the part of Christ's disciples. This is one of the controversies which the Christian church has outlived; and though it survived from Celsus down to the Wolfenbüttel fragmentist of last century, there is no school of unbelief that would now give it, even as an alter-

native, a place on its record. This theory will suit nothing, not even the disappearance of the body. The narrative has to be falsified by the denial that the tomb was sealed and guarded; and the courage and daring of the apostles have to be unhistorically exalted. The moral contradiction is still more outrageous. The greatest of moralists leaves his disciples capable of this infamy; and his influence, in spite of this scandal, through these impure instruments, immediately begins to elevate the world.

Equally incredible, though not quite so monstrous, is the theory that Christ did not really die, but only swooned on the cross, and that he emerged from the grave and showed himself alive to his disciples. This so far attempts, like the first theory, to account for the empty tomb, but goes beyond it in explaining also the supposed appearances. But it really violates the history at every point. It violates the history of the crucifixion, for our Lord received a special wound to make sure of his death; it violates the history of the burial; for even, if recovered from a swoon, he could have found no means of extrication; and it violates the history of the appearances of resurrection, for Christ could not thus have suddenly recovered and his disciples never suppose him a returned survivor of the last penalty, but

always one actually risen. This scheme disagrees with the character of Christ's enemies, who would not have done their work so slackly; of his friends, who could not have made such a mistake, or received such an impulse from a mere natural return; and most of all, of Christ himself, who could not have so acted as to have suffered such a delusion to arise as that his case was one of resurrection, and must have come out of his hiding-place to have exposed it. This theory is only worthy of the naturalism of a Paulus; and though the genius of Schleiermacher has unhappily condescended to it, it is one of those eccentricities which do not even set a fashion, but after a day's wonder pass away.

131 The only theory that is now seriously and widely held is what is called *the vision theory*, or that Christ's disciples, through the influence of love or faith, or some other principle distinct from wilful error, were led mistakenly to believe that their Master had returned from the dead, and propagated the accounts of these mere visions as actual appearances. This is the view set forth by Strauss and Renan in their well-known works, though Renan inconsistently adds on to this the theory of fraud, and supposes it conceivable that Mary Magdalene and the other women had something to do with the transfer of the body. These

writers further differ, Strauss in supposing that the appearances, due to the action of imaginative love and longing, only began in Galilee, and that the disciples after a long interval returned to Jerusalem to start the report and found the Christian church; whereas Renan makes all begin immediately in Jerusalem. Each of these writers, in setting aside the other, attests the strength of the Christian position; for if all began in Jerusalem and began at once, by the appearances immediately happening, and being appealed to there, Strauss seems to feel that the resurrection must be a fact; while Renan probably realizes the difficulty of contradicting the evangelists here as to place and time, and yet founding anything anywhere on their testimony. As it is, the difficulties of Strauss, who is here the better advocate of unbelief of the two, are immense. He has not only to create in Galilee, amid disappointment and defeat, and with no prophecy of resurrection, a mood of mind that made belief in resurrection easy; but when the disciples return to Jerusalem the appearances of the risen Christ are to be vouchsafed to meetings of any size, and after a long silence, to help them in reviving an unwelcome and fading memory; while thus excited and even fanatical, the Jewish Christians are to be so lofty and earnest in spirit as to shake the skepti-

cism of Paul, and predispose him to a similar vision and testimony; yet these visions of the risen One are suddenly to end, and without them Christianity is to prevail in regions where neither risen Christ nor unrisen had ever been heard of or expected. If the resurrection demands faith, it cannot be said that this theory, which is perhaps the best that can be offered, dispenses with it; and we see how little it fills up the gap in the fact that Baur prefers to leave the whole subject of the resurrection of Christ a mystery; and Keim, though otherwise disposed to leave out miracle, is prepared to grant its ingress here a last possibility, and to conceive that the glorified spirit of Jesus so acted on his disciples that they confounded it with his material presence. Against these visionary schemes the clear testimonies of the evangelists and of Paul maintain their place.

Attempts have been made to shake the authority of Paul by urging that his own vision of Christ, which he connects with the rest, was only inward. But this is supported by nothing in his other references to this memorable event which in Acts affects to blindness his bodily sense; nor can we well understand a visionary appearance extended to five hundred witnesses, or by any fairness of interpretation introduce into

this an argument for the literal resurrection of the body, the very turning-point of which lies in Christ's resurrection being itself real and literal.

We are here, then, towards the end of the nineteenth century, as unprovided with any deliverance from the historical necessity of accepting the resurrection of Christ and other Gospel miracles, as in the first century; and the whole process of criticism and philosophy has simply been to show that if the supernatural is cognizable and provable, it is here manifested and proved. No one can admit, or has ever admitted, the resurrection miracle, without granting the others in the Gospel history. The apostle Paul, in words not contested by the most extreme criticism, claims to have wrought miracles in his own person, and claims this as what belonged to other apostles. "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds." 2 Cor. 12 : 12. The miraculous element in the Old Testament will not be contested by those who admit it in connection with Christianity, or who allow a single prophecy of Christ, or indeed any revelation before his advent. Thus, where resistance is overcome at one point, it yields throughout; and though it is

a quite lawful question whether some particular occurrences are held forth in Scripture as miraculous in character, the general reign of miracle is established.

The Christian church, indeed, is far from saying that the mere historic belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, or in other miracles, will of itself make any man a Christian, for he must add to this—or, rather, have added by a higher grace—a discernment of the divine greatness of Christ as a Saviour from sin by his sacrifice, and a reliance upon this and the other provisions of the Christian remedy, which are all connected with Christ's death and resurrection. Nor is it held by the Christian church that the argument from miracles is the only avenue by which the presence of God in support of Christianity may reveal itself, and lead up to that higher faith in which the more historical belief that is thus variously strengthened has its true and saving consummation. At the same time it must be held that if the Christian scheme be not founded on fact, and attested by historic evidence, its saving applications and influences must be cut off, and rendered through any other channel impossible; so that while the historic proof of Christianity does not make Christian faith, its historic disproof would unmake it. It is in this deep and important sense that the ar-

gument for miracles is contended for in this tract, and, as the writer rejoices to believe, by an ever-growing host of earnest apologists; and it is his prayer that however the cause must ever transcend the best powers of the advocate, it may not be contended for in vain.

THE WITNESS
OF
MAN'S MORAL NATURE
TO
CHRISTIANITY.

BY THE

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ARGUMENT OF THE TRACT.

THE existence of the moral nature of man, and the existence of Christianity as a religion whose doctrines are recorded in certain documents, and which is historical in its origin and potent in its influence, are assumed. The most important facts of man's moral nature and life are set forth, and their correspondence is shown with the leading revelations of Christianity, with what Christianity teaches of the character and government of God, the unique character and ministry of Christ, and with the moral teaching of Christianity.

Conscience accords with Christianity. Man's aspirations after perfection are met by it. The redemption it provides is adapted to man's sinful state. Man's moral nature recognizes the beneficial influence of Christianity on society. Conscience responds to the Christian doctrine of retribution. The Christian doctrine of immortality satisfies man's moral nature.

The Witness of Man's Moral Nature to Christianity.

THE religion of Christ lays claim to authority so high and special that it cannot be a matter of surprise that its claims are constantly being questioned. In a sense, Christianity is always on its trial; and happily the witnesses are many upon whom Christianity may call to give evidence on its behalf.

Recognizing the value of them all, we propose to examine one of these witnesses with care, thoroughness, and patience.

MAN'S MORAL NATURE AND LIFE may be found, upon attentive inquiry, to yield evidence the most important and material of all. For, be it observed, Christianity is not simply a body of truth; it is a practical law, a revealed principle, motive, and aim of life. And man is not simply an animal, not even simply an intellectual agent; he is a moral being, with perceptions of right, a

consciousness of duty, a power of choice, a nature essentially responsible, with spiritual affinities and immortal hopes. If the evidence furnished by the special nature of man with regard to the claims of Christianity can be fairly taken, that evidence will certainly be relevant, and our conviction is that it will be found to support those claims in a manner both effective and conclusive.

I.

THE NATURE OF THE ARGUMENT.

EVERY argument proceeds upon a certain basis of admitted fact; as, for example, the principles of reasoning native to the mind, and the phenomena which actually exist, whether in outward nature, in the mind, or in human society. We here make two assumptions. First, we assume *the facts of man's moral nature* as they are and can be shown to be. Secondly, we assume *the existence of Christianity* as a religion whose doctrines are recorded in certain well-known documents, and as a religion having a historical origin and wielding an undeniable force in human society.

Addressing ourselves to those who do not deny the facts or disparage the dignity, or even discredit the authority of man's moral nature, we aim at showing them that their acknowledgment

of man's moral nature, and their reverence for the moral law, should in all justice lead them to admit the authority of the Christian religion. The acceptance of the one may be shown logically to involve the acceptance of the other.

For dogmatic atheists this line of reasoning has neither validity nor interest. If there be no God, it is useless to endeavor to prove that Christianity has a divine origin. But it may cast some light upon that great Unknown in which many minds find, or rather fail to find, the Unknowable. And for deists and skeptics this line of thought has a profound significance, leading them whither many would fain be led, if only they could lay their hand upon the clew.

The argument is one from obvious adaptation and from certain correspondence.

Look at the works of human art. Here is a lock, with many wards and curious intricacies; and here is a key, unlike other keys, and with singular peculiarities. Experience shows that there is a correspondence between the lock and the key, for the one exactly fits and easily opens the other. They are the workmanship of the same skilful artificer, and are made, under the direction of the same intelligent design, each for the other. The key fits the lock; the lock, so to speak, explains, accounts satisfactorily for, the key.

Look at one of the works of nature—as we should say, of divine creative power. Take some part of man's bodily constitution. Here is the eye, a marvel of optical mechanism. And here is light, an ethereal undulation, entering the eye, affecting the optic nerve, and awakening the sensation of sight. We say the eye is adapted to the light; light is adapted to the eye; neither can be understood or explained without the other. The theist recognizes in these the designed and corresponding products of the wisdom and the power of the same divine Optician and Mechanician.

The rejection of design, of purpose, is irrational and unphilosophical. The repudiation of conscious purpose, and of voluntary effort to attain purpose, in the human sphere, is the extinction of philosophy, and is an insult to consciousness. If mind have indeed presided over the creation or development of the universe, it would be absurd to exclude such adaptations as are everywhere apparent in nature from the province of that mind's foresight and control.

If there are traces of design in the constitution of man's moral nature; if he may justly be said to have been made so as to distinguish between right and wrong, to approve of virtue, to aspire to progress and perfection in all good, to find a law and motive to the better life in a super-

sensible sphere; if man's nature is distinctively religious, having reference to a divine Ruler and Lord: if this be so, what follows? This follows: that if Christianity be the revelation of the mind and heart of the Supreme, *we may expect to find a correspondence between the two*; they may be expected jointly to disclose the intentions of their common Author, and will find, each in the other, its proper complement.

It is not urged that this correspondence demonstrates the authority of Christianity. The case is not one for demonstration, which belongs to another sphere. But it is claimed that there is a *high degree of probability* that the Author of nature and of man, who is consequently the Author of what is most distinctively human—man's moral nature—is also the Author of Christianity, as a religion adapted alike to man's deepest needs and loftiest aspirations.

The witness before us has this advantage over some others: it speaks a language all can understand. Every reflecting man who desires to know what is true, to love what is good, to do what is right, hears from the recesses of his own breast, and in his own familiar language, the evidence in question. The reader has not to ask, What is the dictum of the scientist or the philosopher or the scholar? but, What is the deliverance of my

own conscience, my own heart, my own daily experience and observation? "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart." Rom. 10:8.

This remark, of course, presumes, on the part of the inquirer, not only attention to his own nature, but also a candid consideration of the real claims of the Christian religion. Let it be clearly understood that it is not of Christianity as embodied, with more or less of justice and completeness, in the life of its professors, that we speak; far less is it of any actual historic church; for both professing Christians and "visible churches" have too often utterly misrepresented the religion they have claimed to represent to the world. We speak of Christianity as constituted by its authoritative Founder.

This appeal to man's moral constitution as in harmony with the religion of Christ constitutes an argument both reasonable and valid, and one the force of which all men are capable of feeling.

It would be a mistake to suppose that an appeal to the moral nature of man is an appeal to evidence opposed to reason, or independent of reason. If we were to try to show, from a careful inquiry into man's bodily constitution, that he is adapted to a life of labor and temperance, and if we were able to point out several respects

in which such a life contributes to exercise and develop the muscles, to promote digestion, to sustain the physical constitution in health and vigor, to promote comfort, and on the whole to increase the amount of pleasure, the exhibition of such a correspondence would be a reasonable and conclusive method of argument. Similarly, to aim at showing that man is, as a moral being, adapted to a religious—a Christian—life: this is not to forsake reason and to take refuge in sentimentality. It is to reason legitimately upon plain and unquestionable facts, according to the natural principles of the intellect with which we are endowed, and upon methods which we constantly and justly employ.

II.

WHAT ARE THE FACTS OF MAN'S MORAL NATURE AND LIFE WHICH ARE OF HIGHEST INTEREST AND VALUE?

THAT MAN IS A MORAL BEING who can be so shameless as to deny? Philosophy did not wait for the advent of Christianity before she proclaimed the dignity of man to lie in his capacity for duty, his voluntary subjection to a law of righteousness. On these topics the glorious thinkers of ancient Greece, Plato and Aristotle, have

said things as grand as literature records. It needs not that one be a Christian, it is enough that one be a man, in order to appreciate and to insist upon the supreme excellence of morality as the crown of human nature and life.

Are we like cattle, that we need but to be fed and housed, left to live our little term, and die? Are we only raised above the brutes by a more developed intelligence, by a higher power of adapting means to ends, by a faculty of foresight, by the gift or acquirement of articulate speech? Might we not possess all these, and yet be less than men? What is it that gives to a human being dignity in his own view and interest in the view of his fellows? It is the possession of a moral nature and life which distinguishes man from the brutes, which is his chief characteristic, his noblest prerogative.

Show me a fellow-creature who suffers every disadvantage incident to the state of humanity. Let him be crippled in his limbs, feeble in his frame, poor in circumstances. Let his calling be mean and sordid, and let there be in his appearance and his station nothing to excite the vulgar admiration or even attention. Let him be of neglected education, untrained and undeveloped powers. Still you show me a *man*; and because he is a man I honor him. Poor, feeble, ignorant

though he be, he is capable of much that is purest, gentlest, bravest, noblest, best in humanity. He can be a dutiful son, a faithful husband, a kind and self-denying father, a loyal subject, and a generous friend. He can love; he can shed the tear of sympathy; he can bear his daily burden of labor and care with cheerfulness. He can toil through patient years for wife and child; he can reach to a sinking brother the hand of willing help. He can brave the scorn of the bigot and the insult of the fool, and can hold to his own convictions through misunderstanding and persecution. He can worship his Maker and can trust his Saviour. And when the time comes for him to die, he can, not with brutish indifference, but with tranquil confidence, lie down and give up his soul into the hands of Him who gave it.

The being of whom all this, and more than this, is true, is a being possessed of a moral nature. He has a clear view of the right, and the power to admire, to choose, and to perform it. He has a conscience to which he may be loyal. He can frame to himself some notion of a God, and can recognize the presence and the voice of the divine Father. He can even deliberately order his life by reference to a standard of good which he has not realized, and with a view to an eternity which only faith can see.

There is a sense in which our opponents admit the moral nature of man. No one denies that man has capacity for action; and it is maintained by some that he is always driven to act by a desire to obtain pleasure and avoid pain. But this does not represent, and obviously does not exhaust, the facts of the case. Human nature and life involve something more than the balance between bodily functions and external nature, accompanied by consciousness, and especially by joy and suffering. Not here attempting to explain the undoubted connection between the physical and the mental, and simply rejecting as unphilosophical the dogmatic assertion of the subserviency of the latter to the former, we would lay down certain facts.

Liberty, though, on purely dogmatic and irrelevant grounds, questioned by some students of physical science, is so evident a fact of human nature that men act upon its reality in reference both to themselves and to others. It is the highest prerogative of the spirit that it possesses true freedom and self-government.

Responsibility is a consequence of freedom, and means something more than a mere mechanical subjection to punishment inflicted by fatal laws upon those who break them. Every effort to reduce man to the position of a wheel in the vast

mechanism of nature, moving as he is moved, rouses the protest of dishonored and outraged humanity. Man chooses between a lower and a higher principle of action, assured that his own moral elevation or deterioration is involved in the choice he makes.

Conscience and *duty* are inseparable and correlative. What man *ought* to do, the voice within approves and enjoins with a moral imperative. Theories of conscience differ, but the great cardinal fact of conscience remains unassailable. The command of *duty* within responds to the standard of *right* without us.

The *moral law* is something quite different from that uniformity of sequence which is denominated law (by a usage of adaptation) among the cultivators of physical science. It has also important points of difference from those social and political regulations which, as one source, supply us with the conception. It is independent of man's judgment and feeling, yet its excellence and authority may be intuitively perceived. Whether obeyed or violated, it asserts its rightful preëminence, and deigns not to lower its lofty claims, however they may be defied or resented by the rebellious.

Such are the great primary facts of man's moral nature: liberty of choice between higher

and lower ends and motives, an inner conviction of responsibility for the choice resolved upon, an intelligent apprehension of the law of rectitude, a consciousness of obligation to obey that high and sacred and imperative command, a nature which can upbraid for sin and which can aspire to goodness.

The possession of a moral nature, the subjection to a moral law, must be regarded as man's distinguishing characteristic, his noblest endowment. It is not a man's property, it is not his capacity for enjoyment, it is not even his power of knowing and subduing nature, which constitutes man's chief interest and real dignity.

It is his *character*, by which we understand the principles which he voluntarily accepts and deliberately embodies in his conduct, the moral tone and temper of his life, the moral influence he exercises over his fellow-men. It is these, in a word, which give true humanity to man.

These truths are not merely asserted by ethical philosophers and theologians; they are *recognized in human society*. Mutual confidence is at the foundation of social and civil relationships. Justice is required, and benevolence is praised, in all civilized societies. Virtue, disinterestedness, and unselfishness are held in esteem, even by those who do not themselves possess such qualities, and

whether they profess to esteem them or not. The regulations of society embody some portions of the moral law, and rely upon some of the moral sanctions.

So important is morality deemed in human communities, that it is in part elaborated in jurisprudence and embodied in *legislation*. The governments of earth, the laws of nations, the magistracies by which law is administered, and the penalties by which it is enforced—all are witnesses to the exalted position which the conduct of men and the springs and motives and aims of conduct, hold in the estimation of mankind.

To complete, for our purpose, this review of man's moral nature, we must advert to a distinction of great importance, which is in theory often overlooked, though practically too obvious for concealment. Human nature may be regarded either as in its possible excellence or in its actual defects. Scientifically, we may distinguish between the *normal* and *abnormal* state of man. We do not need the Scriptures or the witness of religious teachers to convince us of the reality of this distinction. What man's nature is ideally is one thing; what it is actually is another. We do not find this distinction elsewhere; and its existence here implies the specialty of the moral nature and life of man.

Man, as we know him, is in an *abnormal* condition. There are those who would not agree to this statement, who would say, Man is as nature made him, but is in the way to be something better, which also nature will make him in good time. At all events, this must be granted as true of men, that they are not generally what they ought to be, and may be, and perhaps will be. There is a schism between the ideal and the actual. Moral evil, what theologians call *sin*, is a great and fearful fact.

This significant duality may at first sight seem to render it a very difficult task to take the evidence of man's moral nature. On the one side we have man's highest intuitions of what is good and morally beautiful. On the other side we have man's evil tendencies and habits. If we say man's nature is noble, admirable, sublime, the loftiest of the Creator's works, we speak the mere and undeniable truth. If we say man's nature is corrupt and depraved, who can dispute the assertion? In the one case we use the term "nature" of the ideal and perhaps attainable state of man, as that which is most excellent and most imbued with and most illustrating the divine. In the other case we use "nature" to designate the actual, the general, state in which men are found to be living, wherever they exist.

Does this twofold and (as it may seem at the first view) all but contradictory view of man's moral state, render it an impossibility to elicit a coherent testimony, whether for or against Christianity? Our contention is that this fact, which seems to present a difficulty, does in reality impart to the witness in question a convincing and conclusive power.

III.

IT REMAINS TO EXHIBIT IN SEVERAL PARTICULARS OF ADMITTED IMPORTANCE AND SIGNIFICANCE THE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN MAN'S MORAL NATURE AND LIFE ON THE ONE HAND, AND THE LEADING REVELATIONS OF CHRISTIANITY ON THE OTHER.

IN this endeavor the twofold aspect of man's moral nature and condition must be kept in sight. Is it the fact that human nature is excellent, admirable, transcending all earthly things in dignity and value? Has man a power—whether by creation, inheritance, or acquisition—a power of appreciating and perhaps realizing all moral beauty? Then it must be shown that Christianity offers to him the ideal, the very source of all goodness, in the God whom it reveals; and the

realization, the model, the motive of all goodness, in the Saviour whom it alone presents to man. Is it also the fact that man's nature is a fallen nature, or (if this representation be objected to) a very imperfect nature, prone to come short of the high ideal, which nevertheless is native and proper to it, and apt to take the lower level and to seek the lower end? Then it must be shown that Christianity comes to him recognizing this fact, and prepared to deal with it, not by palliating or overlooking the mischief, but by convincing men of sin, by securing to them divine forgiveness, by extending to them the divine remedy of compassion and mercy, by providing for them the means to a new and holy life.

I.

MAN'S MORAL NATURE AGREES WITH THE WITNESS OF CHRISTIANITY TO THE CHARACTER AND GOVERNMENT OF GOD.

Some philosophers, as Sir William Hamilton, have gone too far in affirming that nature has no convincing testimony to give to its Creator and Lord, that nature conceals God, and that only our moral constitution gives evidence of a spiritual Maker and Ruler. Still it seems just to say that our moral nature is the one leading interpreter of

the great facts of the divine government. Especially is this the case with the moral attributes displayed in the divine treatment of humanity. The very ideas of righteousness, mercy, longsuffering, retribution, are ideas which we do indeed apply to our conception of God, but which we derive from our own constitution, our own relations, and from those varied experiences which our constitution underlies, which our relations develop. We can conceive of intelligent but non-moral beings who might perceive the traces of power, wisdom, and foresight as these exist in the material world. But it is only a moral nature that can admire, revere, adore; that can cherish gratitude, faith, and love. Intellect might apprehend something of a mighty Artificer, but only a moral being can recognize a just and merciful Ruler, a tender and benevolent Father.

Just such a Deity as the Scriptures reveal, as the Lord Christ most clearly and fully manifests, just such a Deity our nature is constructed to acknowledge as corresponding to itself. In virtue of our moral constitution we appreciate moral excellence and beauty, and we are capable of adoring a Being who, in virtue of possessing moral attributes in perfection, deserves and commands our faith, homage, and worship. The eternal Su-

preme, revealed in the Bible, and manifested in Jesus Christ, realizes all our conceptions of moral perfection; nay, He actually exalts and purifies those conceptions themselves. This indeed, if what has been said is justifiable, is only what might have been expected. He who framed the soul-harp as his own choicest workmanship, he, and he alone, can sweep all its strings, and can call forth all its celestial melody.

Our constitution is such that we recognize and revere moral authority—moral, as distinguished from the authority of mere force. In this, however the origin of such a constitution be accounted for, we are above the most sagacious of the brutes. Justice and equity, loyalty and unfaithfulness, merit and ill-desert, mercy and forgiveness, reward and punishment—all these are ideas familiar in human society, and are necessary, not only to its order and welfare, but even to its existence. And as our moral qualities suggest the divine attributes, so our moral and social relationships, and the ideas to which they give rise, suggest the character and principles of the divine government. The fact is, that when revelation makes known the kingdom of God, the mind and heart of man find in that kingdom a perfect satisfaction. The principles and methods of that government, the more they are understood, the more

do they commend themselves to our nature. The voice within answers to the voice without. As the rocks upon a river's bank send back in echo the roar of the cannon or the music of the horn, so does the divinely-fashioned heart of man yield an immediate and exact response, alike to the thunders of Sinai's law, and to the still small voice that reaches us from the sacred hills of Galilee, or from the sorrowful garden of Gethsemane.

2.

MAN'S MORAL NATURE WITNESSES TO THE
UNIQUE CHARACTER AND MINISTRY OF
CHRIST.

History witnesses to the facts of the Saviour's life; but the heart witnesses to the Saviour himself.

An impersonal God is an abstraction, to which little interest can attach, and from which no help can come. If God be defined as "the Power, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness," the question forces itself, Is such a Power conceivable which is not the power of a living, conscious, intelligent being? Is moral power—and that which makes for righteousness must surely be moral—conceivable, apart from a nature distinguished by moral qualities, in which nature the moral power

must reside? The recognition of a moral rule involves the being of a living and personal God.

Now Christianity is *the* religion which makes known a personal Deity, and thus contradicts at once the polytheism of the Gentiles and the pantheism of the philosophers. And how does it render this service to humanity? By revealing to us, in and by Jesus Christ, the living God, who is "the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe." The personality of the Eternal was indeed revealed to the Hebrews, but it was in Jesus of Nazareth that the divine nature was brought near to man. "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1:14.

So far as oral teaching extends, perhaps more of God was taught by Jesus in two utterances than has been taught in all words besides. When he said, "God is a Spirit," John 3:24, and taught his disciples to say, "Our Father, which art in heaven," Matt. 6:9, he revealed more than volumes of philosophy could have unfolded.

But it was *in himself* that the chief revelation was conveyed to mankind. "He that hath seen Me," said Christ, "hath seen the Father." John 14:9. Through the Incarnation Christianity conveys the knowledge of the Father. No longer

was God distant, hard to apprehend and to realize. From that time onward the most elevated human notion of the Supreme and Eternal has been derived from the Son, who made known the Father. The human heart had long cried aloud for the Creator, the Ruler, the Father; and now the response came, not in words, but in the person and ministry, the character and influence, the sufferings and sacrifice, the triumph and glory, of the Christ. The human heart received and welcomed the response, and has never ceased to welcome it with gratitude and with joy. "This is our God; we have waited for him!" Isa. 25:9. The attributes which the soul most admires and honors it sees vital and active in the life of Immanuel. The righteousness and holiness, the benevolence and pity, which are embodied in the earthly ministry of Jesus, perfectly correspond with the intuitions of the moral nature. It cannot be denied that the moral nature recognizes in Christ the realization of its ideal of moral perfection. Who does not feel that it would be an absurdity to put forward any other being as the incarnation of absolute moral excellence? We should shrink, as from a madman, from any fellow-man who claimed for himself a sinless nature and a perfect virtue. But he who asserted himself to be the Son of God was above all detrac-

tion, and is entitled, by the suffrages of mankind, to the designation, "The Holy One and the Just." "Which of you," said he, "convinceth me of sin?" John 8:46. "Why callest thou me good?" Matt. 19:17, was his question addressed to an admiring inquirer: "there is none good save God," which was a virtual claim to be "equal with God." Witnesses at His trial could substantiate no charge against him; his judge found no fault in him; the officer who superintended his crucifixion averred, "Certainly this was a righteous man!" Luke 23:47; and the dying malefactor justly testified, "This man hath done nothing amiss." Luke 23:41. Thus the unprejudiced observers of his life acknowledged his peerless holiness, and even prejudice itself was dumb before the moral dignity of the Son of Man.

The judgment of contemporaries did but anticipate the judgment of coming generations. Men may not always be the best judges of what is true or of what is wise; but the common voice hails the goodness of the good and the greatness of the great. The moral nature of man is the same throughout the ages; and there is no mistaking its verdict upon the claims of Christ. The moral judgment renders belief to his words, consent to his claims, veneration to his character.

There was, and is, but one solution to the

problem presented by the unique phenomenon. Christ is the Son of the Father, who came from God and went to God. A solution this which not the white light of reason only, but the warm glow of pure and sympathetic feeling, reveals as conclusive and satisfactory. A solution this in which the universal conscience finds repose. A solution this in which the wisest and the best of men have acquiesced, and which has rejoiced the hearts of untold myriads of needy, sinful, yearning, and aspiring beings.

3.

MAN'S MORAL NATURE ATTESTS THE EXCELLENCE OF THE ETHICAL PRINCIPLES AND THE ETHICAL CODE OF CHRISTIANITY.

IN the ancient Paganism, religion and morality were independent of each other; religion consisted of a routine of observances conducted largely by a priesthood, and morality, when scientific, based itself upon philosophy. In the Hebrew system there was a combination of doctrinal beliefs with ethical commands; and every reader of the Old Testament is aware that conduct is very largely the province which religious law-givers and prophets sought to conquer and to hold for God, the righteous King. The Christian Scrip-

tures stand preëminent in their insistence upon morality as the "fruit" of religion. And what a morality it is! Even unbelievers have exhausted the resources of language in their efforts to extol its purity, its adaptation, its spiritual power. Two peculiarities are here especially deserving of notice. (1.) *The unsectarian, catholic nature of Christian ethics.* Other systems have their favorite virtues, their distinctive aspect of the moral life of man. Now, looking for the moment at morality as concerned only with man's relation to his fellow-man, it may be asserted that the Christian code is faultless and complete, though not, of course, in the view of scientific jurisprudence, systematic. Let any one who doubts this read the fifth chapter of Matthew's Gospel and the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. It cannot but be observed that, while the sterner virtues of justice, fortitude, and chastity are stringently enjoined, a special stress has been laid upon what may be termed the gentler and softer virtues of compassion and benevolence, which have generally been regarded as distinctively Christian. There is not a human one-sidedness, but rather a divine comprehensiveness and completeness, in the ethical code of the New Testament. (2.) Attention should also be paid to another prominent feature of Christian morality: *the insistence upon the*

subjection to the perfect law of holiness and charity of the very thoughts and desires of the heart. This is a philosophical principle; but it is philosophy made practical and popular. It recognizes that the spiritual nature is the source of the good and evil which display themselves in the actions of the life. Out of the heart—such is the teaching of the Prophet of Nazareth—proceed the actual vices and the actual virtues of mankind. As pure streams from a fountain undefiled, so the moral excellences that promote the welfare of society flow from a heart cleansed by the Spirit and warmed with the love of God.

Now, however philosophers in their exalted moods may have recognized the necessity of a spiritual lustration, it is certain that Christianity alone has made the belief of the need of inward purification and holiness the common possession of man. Judaism did partially for one nation what in this matter Christianity is doing for the race. No religion is so resolutely opposed as is ours to the substitution of the formal and ceremonial, or even of outward rectitude of conduct, for the real purity and charity of the spiritual centre of our being.

In reply to this it is said, on the one hand, that this very spirituality is opposed to human nature, and that, therefore, instead of a harmony we have

a discord, and that thus our argument is shown to be invalid. No doubt Christian morality is alien from the inclinations of those who are living a life of unrestrained passion and self-indulgence. Yet even their conscience takes part with religion against their impulses and habits. Account for it as we may, there is that in the breast of the man who will allow himself to reflect, who will give time for the inner voice to speak, there is that which witnesses to the excellence and beauty of the moral law. Our nature bows down before the highest expression of moral authority; awed and wondering reverence greets the divine Presence. Even among those whom Christianity would designate "the unregenerate," there are those whose candor constrains them to the famous confession of the Roman poet Ovid: "I see and approve the better things, while I follow those which are worse."

Another objection assails our argument from the contrary side. We are told that the morality of Christianity is indeed lofty, but yet is the outgrowth of the ethical sentiments in human nature; that as every quality has appeared in its perfection in some human beings, so goodness was preëminently represented in Jesus, and was painted in colors of especial attractiveness by him, and by those of his immediate school who drank most

fully into his spirit; that there are not two terms to be considered and harmonized, morality and Christianity, for the religion is but the loftiest embodiment of man's moral nature, the flower developed by the vigorous moral life of humanity.

But the fact is that the ethics of Christianity did not come *from* man but *to* man, that the Lord Jesus professed a divine authority for his revelations, and that, after all, what gives Christian morality its true power is its actual embodiment in Christ himself, and the special motive to aspiration and obedience which he furnished in his voluntary devotion to the cross for the salvation of mankind.

To appreciate the argument, the reader must bear in mind what has been said regarding the two aspects of human nature. Man's moral constitution in its normal state involves reverence for a law of right, a law independent, spiritual, all-embracing, and of impalpable and invisible, yet supreme, authority and sanction. The attempts which have been made to substitute pleasure for right, as the ultimate law of human conduct, have either failed by their destruction of morality altogether, or have really abdicated in favor of a principle disinterested and dignified. The reader of contemporary philosophy will appreciate this re-

mark by recalling the progress from Jeremy Bentham's system to Mr. J. S. Mill's "Utilitarianism," and from this to the theories of Mr. Herbert Spencer in the "Data of Ethics." It must be acknowledged that we are amenable to law, and to a law higher than any originating in human society, and that we are so constituted that we feel this to be the case.

Both sides of human nature bear witness to the morality of the New Testament. Our sinful inclinations and habits are evidence that ethics so lofty did not originate with man, but came from a higher and independent source. And our moral intuitions admit and admire the justice of claims so lofty and the beauty of an ideal so divine.

4.

THE HUMAN CONSCIENCE, OR IMPERATIVE OF MORAL OBLIGATION, IS IN ACCORD WITH THE RELIGION OF CHRIST.

THERE is within man a deep-seated consciousness of *duty*. When combined with erroneous beliefs and with groundless prejudices, this faculty may and does lead to perseverance in wrong-doing; but in itself it is a noble attribute of humanity. Endeavors have been made to do away with the great facts of duty and conscience, to resolve

them into such principles as interest, or the dread of suffering, or the associations of early training, or the gregarious impulse which leads men to flock upon the same tracks. But these efforts cannot be said to have succeeded, notwithstanding the dogmatism of the great modern utilitarian who averred that the word "ought" was a word that ought to be banished from language. Bentham was indeed a witness against his own theory; for he taught that "every pleasure is a *prima facie* good, and *ought* to be pursued."

Apart from questions as to the genesis of conscience, the paramount claims of duty are admitted, although there may be differences of opinion as to the sphere within which it works. Virtuous and lofty minds agree in acknowledging both the commanding imperative and the awful beauty of moral obligation. Who can do other than sympathize with the invocation of our philosophic poet:

"Stern Lawgiver! yet thou dost wear
 The Godhead's most benignant grace;
 Nor know we anything so fair
 As is the smile upon thy face;
 Flowers laugh before thee on their beds,
 And fragrance in thy footing treads;
 Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong,
 And the most ancient heavens through thee are
 fresh and strong."

Wordsworth's Ode to Duty.

Now let us ask, What is the relation between the consciousness of obligation within and Christianity? The question almost answers itself. Conscience is assumed, is appealed to, in every book of Scripture. There are nowhere to be found appeals to man's sense of duty which for power and pungency can rival those of holy writ. In the discourses of our Lord, and in the treatises of his apostles, the highest honor is put upon our moral nature, for it is addressed and challenged, its sanction is invoked with confidence. No doubt Christian ministers and churches have often sought to work upon men's base fears and selfish interests and superstitious tendencies. Our religion does indeed warn men of the fatal consequences of unbelief and disobedience; and, on the other hand, it seeks to allure men by the appropriate and powerful motive which impels us to seek our true happiness.

Yet the Scriptures are remarkable for their habit of appealing to the very highest principles. There is a verse in St. Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians which confirms, in a very striking way, the assertion just made: "By manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience (literally, to every conscience of men) in the sight of God." 2 Cor. 4:2. This is quite in harmony with all Christian appeal. Not to sense,

or carnal, worldly interest; not to superstitious terror; not to desire for human applause, but to the moral nature, the conscience, the responsive confession of the enlightened but not unbiassed soul; the voice which we hold to be from heaven addresses itself. We submit that the accord between the summons and the response is evidence that the same wisdom appointed both, and made the one for the other. A heathen moralist felt this when he wrote: "Sacer intra nos spiritus sedet, bonorum malorumque nostrorum observator et custos." (There has its seat within us a holy spirit, the watcher and guardian of what in us is good and evil.) With Seneca this belief was, alas! consistent with disobedience to the authority which yet he confessed to be divine. The power of Christian gratitude and love made Paul's life a far nobler and more consistent thing. And what Paul felt, the lowliest disciple of Christ feels too, though in an inarticulate and unphilosophical fashion. As the thrill of the stricken lute-string evokes the sympathetic vibration of the untouched chord of its companion instrument, so, when Christ speaks, however softly, yet with a divine authority, it is to call forth the responsive music of the human soul. There is one explanation of this harmony which deserves consideration: it is the conviction which Christians

have formed that the same divine Spirit who speaks in the Word and by the Christ speaks also in the sympathetic and responsive spirit of man.

5.

THERE IS HARMONY BETWEEN MAN'S ASPIRATIONS TOWARDS MORAL PERFECTION AND THE RELIGION OF CHRIST.

This assertion may fail to carry conviction to many minds. Oppressed with the spectacle of human sinfulness and degradation, whether freely developed among the brutal and criminal, or carefully concealed by the varnish of luxurious civilization, some observers may be disposed to question the fact of such aspirations as are here assumed. But the distinction already drawn between man's normal and abnormal state must here be borne in mind. We need not extenuate human sinfulness in order to justify a conviction that human nature possesses a strain of moral nobility. Apart from considerations of selfish indulgence, mankind have an admiration for self-devotion and moral heroism.

And as character advances in ethical maturity, this admiration is strengthened by sympathy. Mr. Lecky has well said that characters of remarkable holiness have usually been formed

under the influence of one or the other of two principles, the sense of sin, and the yearning for holiness.

The aspiration in question is, we may confidently assert, provided for in Christianity as nowhere else. No doubt, as will be shown presently, our religion does lay the greatest stress upon human sinfulness. But it is therefore all the more gloriously characteristic of the breadth of Christianity that it appeals to the finest possibilities of moral excellence which the constitution of our nature suggests. The New Testament is a trumpet-call, summoning all who acknowledge its authority to aspiration, progress, and eminence in goodness. Our Lord himself will submit to no compromise with those who, to gain their ends, would take a lower view than the highest of the aim to be set before them by those who "would be perfect." He not only lays down laws of the utmost spirituality and comprehensiveness, he calls upon us to come after him, to "take up the cross and follow him." Inspiration addresses to us the most stirring and sublime monitions: "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect!" Matt. 5:48. "I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus!" Phil. 3:14. Instead of encouraging or suffering men to remain

contentedly upon the lower level, the religion which we accept forbids us either to retrograde or to pause, commands us to advance and to aspire. The whole provision of the spiritual economy is adapted to secure our progress. We are assured that we shall not in vain obey the call we have received. On the contrary, we are assured, if we are faithful unto the end, of final and everlasting fellowship with "the spirits of just men made perfect." We are told in very simple, but in most welcome and inspiring language, that the goal to which we tend shall indeed be reached, that we shall acquire the moral lineaments of our great Deliverer and Leader: "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is!" 1 John 3:2.

6.

THE PROVISIONS OF CHRISTIANITY ARE EXACTLY ADAPTED TO MAN'S ABNORMAL, SINFUL STATE.

Is there any inconsistency between the belief that man was made for holiness and the belief that his condition is a sinful and wretched one? It appears that there is none, when it is remembered that the abnormal implies the normal, that depravity is deflection from a standard of rectitude. Sin could have no meaning were it not

both a violation of law and an abuse of nature. We do not charge a beast of prey with moral evil because of his bloodthirsty tastes and savage, ferocious devastations. The beast fulfils his nature; he may be injurious, but is not blamable. But we say that man has sinned, meaning that in living in violation of the moral law he is not fulfilling his destiny. Only a nature capable of holiness, and meant for holiness, can sin.

Now, man was made for virtue and piety, and can only find his true development in seeking and his true satisfaction in finding these. But if this is incontestable, it is equally certain that his life is deflected from a standard which he cannot but admire, that his way is a departure from a course which he cannot but approve. These things being so, there is an obvious *discordance* between man's proper nature and the actual state in which he exists. This is a fact often strangely overlooked by ethical philosophers. Yet it is impossible to take a just estimate of human nature, unless we consider and allow for the discordance between the possible and the actual in human life. In truth, our moral being is so complex, that while it admits of the existence and even the prevalence of sin, it lifts up a voice of protest against the powerful position which evil holds in humanity. There are *dicta* of mo-

rality, both natural and revealed; but with these *dicta* the actual life of men does not accord. We approve and justify a standard, which nevertheless we fail to reach.

If Christianity, or any religion, is oblivious of this very important fact, such obliviousness is its condemnation. But if Christianity assumes this fact, and if its provisions are in accordance with it, then so far it is justified. Upon examination it will be found that the religion of Christ is such that it has evidently been provided and constructed with reference to the discordance now described. The Scriptures take for granted our strangely divided nature, in which order and disorder, submission and rebellion, strive for the mastery. A great and awful want is acknowledged and declared; but this is not all: for that want a full and perfect provision is made, a provision which evokes from the minds of those who accept it a tribute of grateful appreciation.

Every reader of the New Testament must be aware that Christianity makes the existence and the prevalence of sin its starting-point. In fact, the reign of moral evil over humanity is represented as the very reason of the existence of our religion. There is very much in our Scriptures which would be adapted to a sinless being: there is the law, there are the impulses, the promises,

which we can well believe would be suitable to secure the continuance of such a being in a state of holiness, and his advance to loftier heights of moral excellence. But if the New Testament had been intended for such a being, its whole contents must have been reconstructed. For, as it actually is, it presumes that enmity against God exists, and records the provision for reconciliation with him. Can any inquirer, however superficial, come to any other conclusion than this: that Christianity is a religion designed for a sinful race, and is intended to secure for sinners the blessings of forgiveness, of renewal, of spiritual strength, guidance, progress, and peace?

To be more special upon this point, let us examine *whether with regard to sin, and what sin requires, there is accordance between conscience and Christianity.* They certainly agree in opposing and condemning sin. Yet general custom on the one hand, and popular philosophy on the other, concur in extenuating the evil, proclaiming the necessity and predicting the perpetuity of sin. The Bible certainly says very hard things of sin. It is "the transgression of the law," 1 John 3:4, "that which God hates." It is the sign of a heart at "enmity with God." Its ill-desert is such that no penalty is too severe for those who love and practise sin. "God is angry with the wicked

every day." Psa. 7:11. "The way of transgressors is hard." Prov. 13:15. "The sting of death is sin." 1 Cor. 15:56. "The wages of sin is death." Rom. 6:23. All this appears to many very stern and harsh. But if we take the question, not to our inclinations, not to our neighbors, but to the tribunal of our own conscience, what has this witness—shall we say this judge?—to pronounce upon the matter? Interrogate, it might be fairly said to every reader—interrogate your own nature! Are you not compelled to admit that all that Scripture says concerning sin is true? that nothing less than this would be the truth? Try to explain away the seriousness, the heinousness, of sin. Listen to the defences, the apologies, by which men have striven to palliate, to excuse, even to justify sin. They do not convince you. On the other hand, you cannot take exception to the treatment of human sin by the Holy Scriptures; when they denounce and rebuke iniquity, when they declare the inconsistency between sin and man's real well-being, they carry your judgment and your better nature with them. Because your heart was not made for sin, your heart witnesses that the Word—as we term it, the Word of God—is right in exhibiting sin as heinous in itself, and as deserving the displeasure of God, the righteous and holy Judge.

Human nature, which witnesses to the reality and enormity of sin, witnesses also to *the need of pardon*. The conscience proclaims that sin is not merely a violation of our nature, but an offence against a personal Ruler and Lord. How deeply rooted is this consciousness of the need of forgiveness appears from the prominence given in every religion to the means by which it is professed that forgiveness may be secured and enjoyed. It is not necessary here to show (which might, however, be most conclusively done) the futility of the devices for expiating sin and for reconciling the sinner which have obtained in various stages of society, and which have taken shape in various schemes of religious doctrine and ritual. Neither is it necessary here to expound and defend the theories of the Atonement. But it must be pointed out, as distinctive of revealed religion, that it is *redemptive*, that it at the same time condemns the sin more trenchantly than has ever been done elsewhere, and absolves the sinner more completely and effectually than elsewhere has ever been proposed or professed. Bishop Butler has shown in his "Analogy" the consonance between a mediatorial method of salvation and the usual method of the divine government. Unless we are in rebellion against the whole moral scheme of the universe, we have reason to acquiesce in the central pro-

vision of Christianity now under consideration. And our clearest judgment and our best feelings concur in approving the plan upon which the New Testament represents the divine Ruler as having proceeded. The conscience of the most intelligent and of those most earnestly striving after goodness finds repose and satisfaction in the gospel of pardon and acceptance through Jesus Christ, in whose incarnation and sacrifice the divine Governor appears supremely just, and at the same time supremely gracious—condemning sin and absolving the repenting and believing sinner.

Exception is widely taken in our times to the doctrine of mediation; it is represented by some as violating instead of harmonizing with our convictions of justice. It may, however, be confidently urged that conscience does not rebel against the unadulterated teachings of revelation. Against these sin and prejudice may revolt, but a quickened and enlightened conscience, never! Those who are offended with this central and vital part of the Christian religion are recommended, in the first place, to examine for themselves what is the teaching of Scripture, and not to waste their energies in fighting a foe of their own invention.

Another aspect of the treatment of sin and the sinner by the religion of Christ must be consid-

ered. There is a *practical hostility to the lofty and exacting demands of spiritual religion*. While the higher nature approves, the baser nature resents those claims. Can this hostility be overcome, and how? A religion which should undertake to pardon sin—to release the sinner from the penalties consequent upon sin—and should omit or fail to secure his practical and cheerful submission to the highest law of moral life, would surely betray its origin in man's own selfishness and sinfulness. A religion which should, on the other hand, in remitting the consequences of sin, provide for the forgiven sinner's renewal, reformation, and advance in the love and practice of goodness, would seem to proclaim itself the production of Him whose power in the moral universe "makes for righteousness." At all events, in this case the moral nature of man will give its cordial assent and approbation, and so far will declare itself a most favorable witness.

Now, as a matter of fact, Christianity has introduced a moral power into humanity unknown apart from the presence of Christian faith and knowledge. This power has proved itself adequate to the vanquishing of the natural enmity of the heart to self-control and self-denial. The Christian religion has found and revealed a way of rendering virtue—which is admittedly admira-

ble and desirable—actually attainable; has made the path of obedience progressively congenial, attractive, and delightful. There is general agreement that this is the distinguishing characteristic of Christianity. First, in point of time, comes the provision for pardon; but first in point of real importance comes the provision of a *spiritual power*, which secures the love and practice of holiness. The evidences of that power are open to the observation of all; the secret explanation of that power is a Christian doctrine, which is indeed reasonable, but may not command a universal credence. It is known to the disciples and friends of the Lord Jesus that the great motive to obedience is love to a personal Saviour, a motive capable of producing results which no other power could effect. The apostle Paul has summed up this aspect of our religion in his memorable saying, “The love of Christ constraineth us.” A motive like this may meet with the scorn and ridicule of worldly and selfish minds, but it is in the highest degree consonant with our nature. Personal gratitude, devotion, and consecration to a divine Saviour lead to a higher style of morality, a higher type of obedience, than can be secured by any other means, however agreeable a carnal nature and a worldly policy. Grateful love to the Redeemer, awakened and sustained by the

Holy Spirit of God, prompts to purposes which inspire and regulate a new moral life. A motive more in consonance with our moral nature it would not be possible to imagine.

Let this twofold dealing with the condition of sinful, feeble man be taken into consideration. Let it be observed how Christianity provides for the absolution of the penitent sinner and for the renewal of the character and the purification of the life. And then let the highest reason and the best feelings of humanity be called upon to speak as to the excellence and adaptation of this provision to human nature and to human need. And if the witness be favorable, surely the fact is worthy of weight in the estimation of those who believe in a moral Governor of wisdom and benevolence. At all events, it may be confidently said that so far as the evidence of conscience goes, it supports the claim which we make, that Christianity is divine, and is worthy of all acceptation.

7.

MAN'S MORAL NATURE WITNESSES TO THE
WHOLESOME INFLUENCE OF THE RELIGION
OF CHRIST UPON HUMAN SOCIETY.

No just and complete view of man can regard simply the life of the individual. Although there

have been and are tendencies impelling men to accept Christianity simply as designed for their individual salvation, it was not thus that our religion was conceived by its Founder and first promulgators; nor is it thus that its enlightened adherents conceive it to-day. Man is social, is a member of the family, of the State, of the race. If there is in human nature a selfish tendency, there is also a principle of sympathy and benevolence. Much stress is laid, and justly laid, upon a spirit of unselfishness, upon what it has become the fashion to call "altruism," as a principle complementary to the quest of well-comprehended self-interest.

It may fairly be argued that the strength of benevolence in modern society is owing to the teaching and to the impulse of Christianity. This, however, is not our present contention. All that is asked is this: Is there an agreement between our "better nature," our unselfish aims and efforts, and the truths of the Christian religion taken in conjunction with their influence upon society?

Let the lessons of the New Testament be candidly considered. The divine Teacher issues his new commandment, "Love one another." John 13 : 34. He enunciates the principle of unselfish helpfulness in the admonition, "Freely ye have

received, freely give." Matt. 10:8. His apostles enjoin the maxim, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." Gal. 6:2. They strike at the trunk, the root, of selfishness with the axe-stroke, "Let every man look not upon his own things, but every man also upon the things of others." Phil. 2:4. Does not the true, the higher nature of man listen to these laws and precepts with a wondering reverence, and render to them the response of an approving and consenting testimony?

Yet it is not by words that the giant selfishness is slain. The life, the love, the sacrifice of Christ himself are the real weapons of this spiritual warfare. The *cross* is the true and effectual inspiration of man's devotion to the interests of his fellow-man; the enthusiasm of Christ is the true source of "the enthusiasm of humanity."

"Talk we of morals? O thou bleeding Lamb,
The grand morality is love of thee." COWPER.

It may be freely admitted that language far too sweeping has sometimes been employed to describe the actual amelioration of the human lot which has already been effected by the religion of Jesus Christ. Still, no well-informed and candid person will deny that, of all the forces which have contributed to improve the morals and to promote

the happiness of the race, none can compare for vigor and for efficiency with the Christian faith. Evil is sometimes laid to the charge of Christianity which is in reality the result of the system of sacerdotalism. But how much of good must in all fairness be credited to the influence of Christ upon mankind!

Against vice and crime Christianity from the beginning directed its assaults with remarkable energy and success. Against usages and institutions belonging to half-civilized and selfish states of society Christianity prepared its siege of mines and batteries—sooner or later, but only at the right moment—to open fire. The frightful cruelty, the utter and wanton indifference to suffering, the disregard of life, so characteristic of the ancient world, have certainly been immensely diminished by the prevalence of Christian principles. Those principles gradually but surely undermined the degrading institution of slavery, which has now all but disappeared from among even nominally Christian communities.

What has been done is more than a proof of the beneficent influence of Christianity, and may fairly be deemed an earnest of the triumphs awaiting its progress in the future. There are indications that evils still prevalent, but condemned by our religion, will, by its growing influence, be

checked, if not eradicated. The war has not been carried on with vigor along the whole line where immorality of all kinds is confronted. But this at least may be confidently claimed on behalf of the religion of Christ, that, in every moral conflict in this world, Christianity is on the right side; that, when she speaks, her voice is uniformly and unfalteringly opposed to vice and crime, and in favor of the cause of virtue, liberty, and happiness.

Perhaps even more important than the protest of Christianity against sin is its purifying, elevating, harmonizing, and generally beneficial influence upon the social life of men. As a social religion, it has regard to all classes and conditions of men, and seeks their elevation and well-being. It is a kingdom, and its Head contemplates the welfare of every subject; a family in which the interests of no single child are overlooked. It fosters the legitimate development of society, and furthers the progress of mankind towards universal brotherhood and universal happiness. Each Christian congregation then only fulfils its mission when it is a centre of light and spiritual power. Our religion is the enemy of uncharitableness, hatred, envy, social disorganization, and oppression; it cherishes "the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn, the love of love." Its aim is to bring mankind into unity, by bringing all men

alike into subjection, not to an earthly conqueror or king, but to the true and divine Head of "the new humanity." Compare its design and its method with those of great military conquerors, or with those of such a fantastic philosopher as Comte, and recognize its vast superiority. Here is the highest ideal of the social life of humanity, for here the free development of the individual is to play its part in the harmonious and ordered co-operation of all the members of society towards the one great ultimate result.

The enlightened and unsophisticated conscience, weighing these claims of Christianity in virtue of its power to effect a social regeneration, is constrained to acknowledge their validity. Man's moral nature recognizes in this religion her mightiest auxiliary in the holy war, discerns her hope fulfilled, her aspirations realized. Compared with other claimants, Christianity, in the view of morality, stands alone, peerless and unapproachable,

"Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky."

8.

THERE IS AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF RETRIBUTION AND THE MORAL JUDGMENT OR CONSCIENCE OF MAN

Probably there was a time when religion was regarded by theologians too much as a matter of government, when God was represented too exclusively as the ruler and judge. But in our own day it is common to run into the other, the opposite extreme, and, in laying just stress upon the Fatherhood of God, the pity of Christ, the attractiveness of the gospel, to leave out of sight, perhaps even contemptuously to disparage or to deny, the moral government of God. Now, however much a sentimental and invertebrate theology may fret against the doctrine of responsibility and retribution, those doctrines cannot be overthrown so long as human nature remains what it is, so long as the Scriptures are accepted as of supreme authority. They are opposed from two sides.

Those who regard man as an automaton, acted upon by physical forces, and acting as acted upon (and these are a very numerous and influential class in our days), deny moral retribution. Carrying the analogy of natural processes and laws

into the spiritual realm, they tell us that nature is a system of inflexible laws, and that he who conforms to those laws will prosper, while he who violates them will suffer; that in this sense retribution is a fact, and in no other; that a vicious man, who is prudent, will fare better than a virtuous man who is impulsive; and that, as man ceases to be when his body perishes, we need not concern ourselves about a future which is but a dream.

On the other hand, those who accept as much of Christianity as falls in with their own fancies and prepossessions, tell us that as God is love, we need be under no apprehension that here or hereafter we shall be called to account for our sins, that a benevolent Deity will secure our happiness irrespectively of our conduct, in view of the righteous and binding law of God.

Now, in this controversy, human theories and imaginations are on one side, while on the other are (1) The facts of our moral nature, and (2) the plain statements of Scripture, giving an unmistakably accordant utterance.

Our human life is an education, but it is a probation also. We cannot leave out of view either the reproaches and the remorse of a guilty conscience, or the facts of an overruling and, to some extent, retributive providence, even in this life.

Nor, further, can we set aside the anticipation of judgment, which is almost universal among men, and which is only exterminated when all is exterminated which raises man above the brutes.

In these respects how perfect is the agreement between the teaching of the New Testament and the enlightened and sensitive conscience of man! Not to dwell upon such general statements as "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world by that man whom he hath ordained," Acts 17 : 31, and "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ," 2 Cor. 5 : 10, we may call to mind that from the lips of the benign, compassionate, and gracious Saviour himself came declarations the most comprehensive and unmistakable regarding human retribution. He pronounced *blessings*, but he also pronounced *woes*. He anticipates that general judgment when all nations shall be gathered before him, and when the same lips which shall utter the welcome, "Come, ye blessed!" shall also utter the fearful sentence, "Depart, ye cursed!" Matt. 25 : 34, 41. It is in vain to represent religion as wearing only an aspect of benignity; it wears also an aspect of severity; and in this twofold aspect there is a complete accordance with the manifest facts of our nature.

9.

MAN'S MORAL NATURE FINDS SATISFACTION
IN THE REVELATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN
RELIGION CONCERNING IMMORTALITY.

Man alone, of the inhabitants of earth, has the power to apprehend and to hope for a deathless life. Men are not to be persuaded that this bodily and earthly life comprises the whole of their being; they have good reasons for believing otherwise. The expectation of an endless hereafter is not merely a conclusion derived from argument; it springs from a natural tendency, a *spiritual aspiration*, strengthened by moral discipline. We refuse to believe that we were made with deathless hopes destined to be quenched in the cold waters of annihilation and oblivion. Yet reason is insufficient to transform this longing into a definite belief. We can, while taught by reason alone, go no farther than hope will lead us :

“The hope that, of the living whole,
No part shall fail beyond the grave;
Derives it not from what we have
The likest God within the soul?”

TENNYSON.

A religion which shall command the acceptance of man's nature must satisfy man's loftiest yearn-

ings and anticipations with regard to the future, and must reveal a prospect worthy of man's powers and capacities.

The teaching of Christianity is definite upon these points. It encourages the hope that in a higher condition of existence our best aspirations shall be allowed a wider scope. There will be provision for increase of knowledge; for here we know in part, but there we shall know even as we are known. 1 Cor. 13:12. There will be assimilation of character to Him who is supremely good; for "the pure in heart shall see God." Matt. 5:8. There will be limitless accessions to happiness: "blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." Rev. 14:13. There will be abundant room for the exercise of our social sympathies in "the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven." Heb. 12:23. There will be, what is preëminently congenial to the Christian heart, intimate fellowship with Christ himself: for there "shall we ever be with the Lord." 1 Thess. 4:17. There will be eternal security and felicity: for they "go no more out." Rev. 3:12.

In such representations and assurances Christianity supplies what nature cannot give, fills up the void, makes the vision plain, the voice intelligible. But the case is not merely one of ab-

stract teaching. The explicit declarations of the Saviour are both embodied in his person and supported and sanctioned by his resurrection. "I," said he, "am the Resurrection and the Life; whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." John 11:25, 26.

Such are, in brief, the revelations of Christianity concerning what must always be of intense interest to men—the future and unseen state. Such are the prospects held out by the religion which is equally at home in this world and in the world to come.

What has the moral nature of man to say to revelations such as these? That nature proposes vast questions; how does it receive these answers? It has been well said, "Every man feels within himself a crowd of desires and faculties which this life does not content; and he would deem himself very unhappy, and Him who has made him very unjust, if his destiny were never to attain this happiness, this perfection of which he has the idea. . . . It is that which unavoidably suggests to him thoughts of the other life; and, these thoughts once awakened in his mind, there is no more rest for him if the doubt remains, and if no clear solution comes to resolve it."*

A nature with such requirements cannot be

* Jouffroy, "Nouveaux Mélanges Philosophiques," p. 105.

indifferent to the professions and promises of the religion of Christ. Is it likely that man, so constituted, will turn aside from the revelations of Christianity, and adopt in preference the teaching of the materialist and atheist, according to whom man perishes like the brutes, and is no more—a foam-fleck upon the rushing river of universal being? Or will he not rather exclaim, God made the soul for immortality, and appointed immortality for the soul! Here is found the true and longed-for rest; here the strong, sustaining hope!

CONCLUSION.

The argument presented is one of *adaptation and correspondence*. Man's moral nature being an admitted reality, and the Christian religion an acknowledged fact, it has been attempted to show that the one is fitted for the other. Man's esteem and honor for what is right, his contrition for sin, and his aspirations towards immortality, all testify to HIM from whom not only do they proceed, but the revelation also that responds to and satisfies them; all testify to the CROSS, that brings peace to the conscience and inspiration to the new and better life; all testify to the ascended KING himself, who lives for ever to love and bless, and yet eternally to reign.

The argument is admittedly one of *probability*, and (it is urged) of probability so high as to afford conclusive reason for action. It is an argument *cumulative* in form. Each one of the particulars mentioned has a certain strength; taken together, they constitute a powerful and conclusive argument in favor of our religion, and justify a cordial and practical acknowledgment of its claims.



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